

Promoting Early Reading:  
A Parent Handbook for Developing Children's  
Phonological Awareness Using Authentic Activities

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook for parents to develop their children's phonological awareness using authentic activities that parents and children can complete together. The handbook aims to provide parents with fundamental background information regarding phonological awareness as well as effective instruction practices, followed by authentic activities that are clearly laid out and easy to implement. Through a comprehensive study of the literature it became evident that parents should be the target audience for the handbook as they have the greatest influence on the development of their young children. Phonological awareness was also found to be an important contributor to early literacy development including oral language skills and reading. The handbook was reviewed by 2 teaching professionals in order to claim face validity of the document. The results of the project indicate that the handbook which was produced meets its goals of creating a product that is easy to use, practical, and effective for both parents and children. The implementation of the handbook in the home environment can benefit children's phonological awareness and in turn improve their oral language and reading abilities.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT**

The purpose of this project was to develop a handbook for parents with children in preschool to grade 1 with typical or atypical language development, to assist them in developing their children's phonological awareness. After examining literature about phonological awareness and parent engagement in children's early literacy, it became apparent that a defining feature of the handbook should be the incorporation of authentic activities that could be completed by parents with their children. To assess the face validity of the handbook (Creswell, 2013), two teaching professionals provided critical feedback regarding the structure, clarity, parent accessibility, practical application, and overall effectiveness of the handbook following the development of the first draft. The feedback was applied to the final product.

### **Background and Rationale**

Literacy is a broad term that encompasses basic language skills (speaking and listening), reading, and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; van Kleeck, 2004). Basic language skills are important when developing reading and writing skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). Reading skills can include letter–sound correspondence, vocabulary, print awareness, and phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998). Phonological awareness is an essential skill for good reading and language development (Gunning, 2000; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips, Clancy-Menchetti, & Lonigan, 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

Phonological awareness can develop naturally through word play, exposure to print, and reading experiences (Troia, 2004). However, this development does not always occur spontaneously in all children, and direct instruction can be necessary to assist them to develop phonological awareness (Troia, 2004). Phonological awareness can be

removed from meaning and print and is defined as the manipulation of sounds and speech (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). In order for children to possess a true understanding of phonological awareness, they must first understand that words can be divided into sounds (Brice & Brice, 2009; Gunning, 2000; Siegel, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). These sounds can be the size of a syllable, or smaller, a phoneme (the smallest unit of sound that produces change in a word; Justice, 2010). Phonological awareness consists of many elements such as rhyming, blending, segmenting, alliteration, and manipulation. Of particular foci for this study are the three core elements of rhyming, blending, and segmenting (Gunning, 2000). Briefly, rhyming is defined as changing the beginning of the word/pseudoword while the end of the word/pseudoword remains the same (Gunning, 2000). Blending is the combining of smaller units of speech to produce larger ones (Gunning, 2000). In contrast, segmenting is the separation of larger units of speech to create smaller units of speech (Gunning, 2000).

Basic language abilities are closely connected with phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). Children that struggle with one of these skills (language or phonological awareness) are often faced with struggles in the other area as well (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Snow et al., 1998). For example, delayed development of phonological awareness is often found in children that have delayed language development (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). Children that struggle with recognizing distinct parts of speech also often have difficulty with phonological awareness skills (Snow et al., 1998). Therefore, through improving children's phonological awareness, it is likely that their language abilities will also see a positive change (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). Oral

language skills (speaking and listening) are important to develop reading and writing skills and understand the basic structures of language (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Through phonological awareness, oral language can be improved (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

The development of children's phonological awareness is closely related to their reading ability (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). Phonological awareness is known to be the best predictor of reading success in young children (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze, Ryan, & Stoner, 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). However as children's reading abilities begin to develop, the reading process influences phonological awareness (Hogan, Catts, & Little, 2005). This reciprocal relationship between reading and phonological awareness demonstrates the close connection between these two skills (Hogan et al., 2005). It is important to assist children to develop strong early phonological awareness skills so that they may be strong readers (Hogan et al., 2005).

Children's development is strongly related to their interactions with their natural environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer, Wood, & Willoughby, 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). For many children, parents have a large influence in their early stages of development including the development of literacy skills (Shaffer et al., 2005). Children need to begin learning to read before they begin kindergarten, leaving parents as the primary and most influential teachers at this time in their children's lives (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Shaffer et al., 2005). Parent involvement in the development of their children's early literacy skills, including phonological awareness, is crucial to their children's success (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; van Kleeck, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

As parents are so influential in the early development of children's literacy, they would benefit from the provision of resources and supports to assist in promoting these skills in their children. A handbook is an attractive means for providing parents with such a resource as it is rooted in practice and offers tangible activities for parents and their children. Accordingly, the primary goal of the handbook developed here was to outline authentic activities for parents to complete with their children.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many researchers have identified the importance of the home literacy environment (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Snow et al., 1998; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). A positive home literacy environment is one where the parents are involved in the development of their children's literacy skills (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This type of environment is essential for preschool children in order to provide these young children with necessary literacy skills as they enter kindergarten (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Interventions designed to improve phonological awareness of preschool children may be one way to help children perform better when they enter kindergarten (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003).

Parents have a large influence on the development of their children and their children's early literacy skills (Shaffer et al., 2005). Literacy programs that involve parents have been shown to improve children's language and literacy development more so than interventions where parents were not included (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). Furthermore, early literacy practices that promote interventions implemented by parents



have been promoted as best practice in fostering children's early literacy development (Snow et al., 1998).

Most parents are willing to aid their children in developing literacy skills; however many parents have reported feeling ill prepared to do so, stating that they are unaware of effective practices (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). For instance, while many parents are familiar with the importance and practice of reading storybooks to their children, research suggests that many parents do not use reading behaviours known to enhance phonological awareness (Skibbe, Behnke, & Justice, 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Many parents focus on understanding the content in the stories exclusively instead of also addressing the form of the text and developing phonological awareness skills (Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Because of this, parents would benefit from resources that provide information about intervention practices that have been found to promote children's phonological awareness and early literacy skills and describe how they can be developed in the home.

Most parents want to support their children and develop their literacy skills (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). According to several studies, authentic parent–child literacy experiences are invaluable learning experiences for preschool children (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). However, parents do not always realize that they need to be engaged in the development of their children's literacy skills (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Many parents report that they find it helpful when presented with information about how to effectively implement home-literacy practices as well as information about why these practices are successful (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). The handbook developed here aims to transmit such information about the nature of

phonological awareness as well as provide ideas about authentic activities that parents can complete with their children to promote such awareness.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project was to investigate the role of phonological awareness on early language and reading skills and the role that parents can play when developing these skills in their children. The result of this review was the development of a parent handbook to promote phonological awareness skills in children from preschool to grade 1. The goal of the parent handbook was to provide parents with the necessary background information related to promoting phonological awareness as well as provide them with a variety of authentic activities to complete with their children. The emphasis of the handbook is on authentic learning activities (versus pen-and-paper activities) that parents can complete easily with their children. The aim is for these activities to be fun, interactive, and developmentally appropriate (Brice & Brice, 2009).

### **Scope and Limitations of the Project**

Phonological awareness is an important basic literacy skill that promotes language and reading development (Gunning, 2000; Mann, 2003; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). There is a positive correlation between phonological awareness, language, and reading, with development of these skills being interconnected (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998). The scope of the handbook developed here was limited to phonological awareness in order to provide a specific focus that would have positive repercussions on young children's subsequent language and reading abilities.

The target audience for the handbook is parents, as research suggests that they are key in the early development of children's literacy skills (Shaffer et al., 2005; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Strong home literacy environments have been known to benefit children's performance early on in school, and in turn, improve their overall academic performance (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). It is important that children begin to acquire preliminary literacy skills, including phonological awareness, before they enter kindergarten (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

Two teaching professionals who specialize in the education of kindergarten children with language difficulties provided feedback about the validity of the handbook. Both teachers read the first draft of the handbook and provided feedback that was taken into consideration when producing the final draft. However, limitations were created through this process. First, the small sample of teachers providing feedback limits the face validity of the document by limiting perspectives to those who reviewed this project. This perspective is limited further as both professionals share the same backgrounds and experiences. The teachers work at the same school and teach in the same classroom. Therefore, their philosophy of teaching is very similar as they work collaboratively. Also, their experiences are similar as they both work with kindergarten students who have language difficulties. With a limited variation of professionals to provide feedback, the scope of the project is limited.

Another limitation to the scope of the project is that parents were not consulted directly to explore their needs or whether the handbook meets their needs. It was assumed that the participating teachers would provide insights about parental needs, as their professional duties required them to communicate with their students' parents. Though

the perspective of the parent was indirectly incorporated into the project, it was not directly sought and/or included.

The language used throughout the handbook also limits the audience of the handbook. In order for parents to read, understand, and implement the information found in the handbook, they must possess a fairly high level of literacy. To make the information found in the document more accessible, images and multimedia summaries could have been incorporated in subsequent editions of the handbook.

### **Outline of Remainder of the Document**

The remainder of the document is divided into four chapters. A description of each chapter is outlined below.

Chapter Two contains a review of related literature that was used to guide the development of the handbook. Chapter Two is divided into two main sections, with the first devoted to phonological awareness. Within this section, phonological awareness is defined and explained, including the three main elements focused on within the handbook (rhyming, blending, and segmenting). The connection between reading, language development, and phonological awareness is probed. Then, assessments and interventions of phonological awareness are examined. As the handbook is designed for parents, the second section of the chapter examines literacy practices in the home environment, establishing the importance of parental engagement. Specifically, the importance of a positive parent–child relationship is established and at-home literacy experiences are examined. Then, parental involvement in the development of phonological awareness is reviewed. Finally, the importance of developing a parent handbook about phonological awareness is outlined.

Chapter Three explains the methodology followed in order to develop the handbook. This chapter begins with a rationale of the handbook. Then the research design is reviewed; this includes the review of the handbook by professionals who provided formative feedback which was considered and in some cases added to the final draft of the handbook. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of the project.

Chapter Four contains a copy of the handbook, *Promoting Early Reading: A Parent Handbook For Developing Children's Phonological Awareness Using Authentic Activities*. The beginning of the handbook provides parents with necessary background information including the importance of early literacy and phonological awareness, how to use the handbook, an outline of three critical components of phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, segmenting), the typical development of phonological awareness, and general principles to improve the effectiveness of the activities that follow in the handbook. The majority of the handbook focuses on providing parents with 36 authentic activities to improve children's phonological awareness skills. Each activity provides parents with some background information, a description of the activity, as well as any necessary resources. The handbook concludes by outlining next steps that parents should take as well as listing additional resources for parents to investigate.

Chapter Five presents the summary, discussion, and implications associated with the completion of the handbook. This chapter begins by providing a brief summary of the process of the project as well as the project itself. The discussion reflects upon the overall process of completing the project. Finally, implications associated with this handbook are examined, and suggestions for further resource development and research are provided.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter outlines relevant literature available about phonological awareness with the intent of justifying the creation of a handbook designed for parents to assist them to develop their children's phonological awareness. This chapter is divided into three sections consisting of an overview of phonological awareness, home-based literacy practices, and a rationale for the development of the handbook. The first section is subdivided to several sections including a review of early literacy, phonological awareness, phonological awareness and reading difficulties, assessment of phonological awareness, and phonological awareness interventions. The second section includes discussion of parent–child relationships, at-home literacy experiences, and parent engagement in the development of phonological awareness. The final section provides a rationale for creating a parent handbook to develop children's phonological awareness.

### **Early Literacy**

During early literacy development, children learn about the form, content, and use of language and reading; however they are not yet able to integrate this knowledge into their reading, writing, or oral language fully (van Kleeck, 2004). These skills acquired during this interval are essential in promoting children's long-term literacy skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Beginning in infancy, children are exposed to events that occur either intentionally or unintentionally that promote early literacy (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). These events can include smiling, talking, and playing (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Children benefit from exposure to early literacy activities beyond reading and spelling activities, including activities such as singing songs and play

(Cambourne, 1995, Gunning, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education , 2003; Snow et al., 1998)

Most children acquire basic language skills as part of early literacy processes, including speaking and listening (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Initial engagement with language is usually unintentional and often occurs through incidental learning experiences (Snow et al., 1998). Language skills act as a precursor for the next component of early literacy, reading (Snow et al., 1998). Language and reading skills can be promoted through a variety of processes beyond books, including games (such as games inside and outside the home as well as games that use technology), singing songs, and activities that stretch beyond reading (Snow et al., 1998).

According to Cambourne (1995), literacy instruction is most effective when it incorporates seven specific conditions of learning. The first condition is immersion, meaning that children must become immersed in a variety of different types of texts (Cambourne, 1995). For example, types of texts may include storybooks, alphabet books, and environmental print. Children must also receive a demonstration where they are shown how texts are constructed as well as how they are used (Cambourne, 1995). Expectations must be placed on children as they develop literacy skills, as these encourage them to perform at their highest potential (Cambourne, 1995). Similarly, children should be provided with responsibilities and options, as they will experience increased engagement with associated literacy activities as well as gain a sense of empowerment (Cambourne, 1995). The fifth condition of learning is employment (Cambourne, 1995). Employment means that children are given the opportunity to practice and use the skills they have learned in an authentic/realistic situation

(Cambourne, 1995). Applying these skills reinforces their value to children.

Approximation, or the right to make mistakes, is an important condition for children when developing literacy skills (Cambourne, 1995). Finally, in conjunction with approximation, response is an important condition for learning literacy (Cambourne, 1995). This is, feedback plays an important role in assisting children to acquire literacy skills (Cambourne, 1995). Cambourne suggests that as each of these conditions is increased, children's engagement with literacy activities and their potential to learn from them will also increase. These conditions can be applied to literacy skills as a whole, as well as basic literacy processes such as phonological awareness.

Reading is the skill used to comprehend texts (including visual representations and symbols) and draw meaning from them (Snow et al., 1998). Some basic reading skills include letter–sound correspondence, vocabulary, interest in literacy, and phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998). Though early literacy consists of more than reading, reading is an important component of this stage and is a focus of this chapter, especially in context of its interconnectedness with phonological awareness (van Kleeck, 2004).

### **Phonological Awareness**

When individuals are learning to read there are a number of principles and processes that must be applied in order for them to be successful (Nicholson, 2004). These processes of reading are quite complicated and sometimes are not acquired spontaneously (O'Connor, 2011). Most learners require some instruction and modelling in order for them to become successful readers (Nicholson, 2004). One essential skill of a



good reader is phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

The term phonological refers to the structure of spoken words. Awareness, involves being sensitive to these sounds and being able to manipulate them (Murray, 2006). One of the most simplistic definitions of phonological awareness includes the general appreciation for, and the manipulation of, sounds of speech separated from their meaning (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Phonological awareness is removed from print as well as comprehension. That is, the learner must focus only on sounds in spoken words (Snow et al., 1998).

For many children, phonological awareness develops as an outcome of their natural tendency for word play as well as exposure to print and formal reading instruction (Troia, 2004). In typically developing children, phonological awareness begins to emerge around the age of 2 (Justice, 2010). Phonological awareness continues to develop gradually as children have more experiences with language (Justice, 2010). A shallow sense of phonological awareness including rhyming, segmenting syllables, and detecting similar beginning sounds are usually present in preschoolers between the ages of 3 and 5 years (Justice, 2010).

In order to develop phonological awareness, learners must understand that words can be divided into sounds that are smaller than a syllable (Brice & Brice, 2009; Gunning, 2000; Siegel, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). This fundamental understanding must be in place in order for phonological awareness to develop. Without understanding the smallest unit of sound, the phoneme, phonological awareness cannot be developed

successfully (Brice & Brice, 2009). Phonological awareness begins with grasping the understanding of larger units of sound in speech and progresses until learners understand the smallest units of speech (Murray, 2006).

This progression to acquisition of phonological awareness follows a downward progression of linguistic complexity, from shallower aspects of phonological structure to deeper aspects (Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008; Troia, 2004). The largest unit of language that can be processed is one that consists of the text or verbal stimuli (e.g., story). Such units are considered the lowest or most basic form of phonological awareness (Murray, 2006). The next level of complexity involves individual words (Murray, 2006; Snow et al., 1998). In this stage, learners begin to notice individual words and recognize that a single word can hold a meaning (Murray, 2006), for example, understanding that the word "bed" is the place where people sleep at night.

The next level of linguistic complexity involves syllables (Brice & Brice, 2009; Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998). At this level, learners' understanding of language becomes much more phonologically abstract as they must understand that combinations of the alphabet are used rather than one specifically designated symbol to create representation (Snow et al., 1998). This can be a challenging concept for learners to grasp initially (Murray, 2006). For example, understanding that the word "careful" can be divided into two syllables, care · ful.

A syllable can be divided into two parts, or subsyllabic units, the onset and the rime (Murray, 2006; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). The onset includes the initial consonant, consonant cluster, or digraph until the first vowel sound (Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998). The rime is the vowel and any consonants that follow after the onset

(Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998). Using the word "careful," the onset of the first syllable is the "c," while the rime is "are." The final level of linguistic complexity involves understanding that the smallest unit of sound involves phonemes (Brice & Brice, 2009; Murray, 2006). Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound that can create change in the meaning of language (Justice, 2010), for example, the /c/ in the word "careful." Phonological awareness cannot be complete without the understanding of this concept (Brice & Brice, 2009).

While phonological awareness consists of many skills, there are three components that are especially essential for early reading success (Gunning, 2000). The first of these elements is rhyme (Gunning, 2000). Rhyming involves changing one sound to create a different word and is considered to be an important part of phonological awareness. Within rhyming tasks there are varying levels of difficulty (Gunning, 2000). These tasks range from the most difficult where a sound as small as one phoneme is changed, to easier ones where a sound as large as one syllable is altered (Gunning, 2000). "Tar" and "star" is an example of a pair of rhyming words where only one phoneme is changed, while "cavity" and "gravity" represent an example where one syllable is altered.

The second critical element of phonological awareness is phonological synthesis or blending (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004). Blending is the ability to combine smaller units of speech into larger ones (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004). For example, combining the sounds /c/ /a/ and /t/ to produce the word "cat." Finally, the third and most challenging aspect of phonological awareness is phonological analysis or segmenting (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004). Segmenting is the ability to separate larger units of speech into smaller units (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004). In contrast to blending, segmenting is

the ability to separate the word "cat" into three sounds /c/ /a/ and /t/. Each of these skills requires the individual to be able to hear the units of speech and manipulate them in some way (Gunning, 2000). The smallest unit of speech is the phoneme (Mody, 2004; Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008). A division of phonological awareness in relation to this part of speech is phonemic awareness (Murray, 2006).

Phonological awareness, the ability to manipulate sounds of speech separate from their meaning (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004), is known to be a vital skill of good readers (Gunning, 2000; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). In order for the skill of phonological awareness to be acquired, children must understand that words can be divided into sounds smaller than a syllable (Brice & Brice, 2009; Gunning, 2000; Siegel, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). Once they are familiar with this fundamental understanding, the three main components of phonological awareness (i.e., rhyming, blending, segmenting) can be taught and mastered (Gunning, 2000).

### **Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound and produce subtle changes in speech (Murray, 2006). Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize these units and changes within them (Mody, 2004; Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008). For students who do not acquire phonemic awareness or other aspects of phonological awareness as part of their daily home and school interactions, direct instruction is recommended (Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000). Phonemic awareness instruction is most successful when there is a focus on a limited number of phonemes at any given time (Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008). Furthermore, instructors should aim to work in the learners' zone of proximal

development in order to maximize student learning (Phillips et al., 2008; van Kleeck, 2004). The zone of proximal development is found between the level where children can achieve success independently and the level where they can achieve success with maximal parental support (Shaffer et al., 2005; Skibbe et al., 2004). In order to work within the zone of proximal development it is necessary to combine understandings that students have mastered as well as present them with new challenges (van Kleeck, 2004).

Phonemic awareness instruction, as well as instruction in other areas of phonological awareness, is more effective when it is provided as part of small group or one-on-one instruction (Dickinson, McCabe, & Clark-Chiarelli, 2004; Phillips et al., 2008). This allows the instructor to develop a relationship and interaction with the learners, producing optimal results (Dickinson et al., 2004). This instruction is also most effective when it is provided consistently over short intervals of time (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; Phillips et al., 2008). These small group instructional times should be interactive and last between 10 and 15 minutes per day (Phillips et al., 2008).

Letter–sound correspondence becomes an important aspect of phonemic awareness as learners begin to encounter language in print (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008). Letter–sound correspondence supports strong decoding skills (Phillips et al., 2008). The introduction of print usually occurs with older preschoolers (van Kleeck, 2004). At this time the ability to associate sounds with letters, or what is referred to as the alphabet principle, begins to develop (Bowey, 2002; Brice & Brice, 2009; O'Connor, 2011; Phillips et al., 2008). This understanding becomes important as learners become aware that the sounds correspond with letters and these associations are not coincidental (Bowey, 2002; Phillips et al., 2008). The alphabetic principle later develops into

alphabetic understanding as learners become aware that words are made up of letters that are representative of sounds (Brice & Brice, 2009). Then, learners must develop the ability to encode letter–sound pairings to be retrieved when necessary (Murray, 2006). Finally, learners must be provided with opportunities to discover phonemes in spoken language (Murray, 2006).

A method of reading instruction known as phonics is the final component of phonemic awareness (Phillips et al., 2008). Falling under the umbrella of phonological awareness, phonics is the sounds of speech as represented by letters in print (Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998). Phonics is the understanding of a grapheme as a symbol used to represent a phoneme (Murray, 2006). This skill still focuses on the sounds of speech; however the letter representation, or grapheme, becomes important and carries meaning (Snow et al., 1998).

### **Phonological Awareness and Language Development**

As typically developing infants acquire language, they begin by first understanding the concept of taking turns in speech; though they will often babble without meaning, they demonstrate an awareness of this expectation (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). When language begins to develop, rapid progress occurs and language skills develop at an exponential rate (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). Around 11 months, children are able to understand around 50 common words, showing the development of receptive language (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). However, expressive language is usually not present at this stage, only babbling and playing with sound (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). It is not until around the children's second year (18 months) that they speak words (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010). When children first begin using words, their utterances are

usually only one word long, demonstrating their limitations of comprehension as well as production (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010). However, as they gain more experience and understanding using the language, two-word combinations begin to emerge around 2 years, or 24 months (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010).

Typically developing children begin to show signs of phonological awareness around 2 years of age (Justice, 2010). Phonological awareness continues to develop as children gain more experience with language and are able to manipulate sounds within words (Justice, 2010). When typically developing children reach 3 or 4 years of age, they have an understanding of the fundamental elements of the language that they have been exposed to, and they are able to apply this knowledge (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010). When children reach kindergarten, they usually have a vocabulary nearing 8,000 words as well as the understanding of basic grammar that they can apply and use appropriately in social situations (Gleason & Ratner, 2009).

When these typical developments are not observed in children, an intervention may be necessary in order to prevent greater challenges from developing in the future. Language deficits are often correlated with deficits in phonological awareness, which in turn is strongly positively connected to reading and writing (Gunning, 2000; Hintze et al., 2003; Hogan et al., 2005; Snow et al., 1998).

### **Phonological Awareness and Reading Difficulties**

There is a strong connection between working memory and phonological awareness (Troia, 2004). Working memory, or the retention of information while processing other information, has been demonstrated to be very important to the reading process (Dehn, 2008). Phonological short-term memory is a specific component of

working memory that aids in phonological awareness (Dehn, 2008). The phonological short-term memory store temporarily stores speech in auditory form (Dehn, 2008). As the phonological short-term memory continually receives information, it attempts to connect it to the information stored in the long-term memory (Dehn, 2008). As phonological awareness is developed, the information is coded and decoded auditorally (Troia, 2004). The brain relies on working memory resources to complete the phonological processing operations (Troia, 2004). As a result, working memory plays a large role in the use of strategies employed by successful readers (Troia, 2004). A deficit in working memory may result in difficulties reading and reading disabilities (Troia, 2004).

The prevalence of learning disabilities is difficult to measure accurately as there are a number of criteria used to define the exceptionality (Kronenberger & Meyer, 2001). However, the prevalence of learning disabilities in U.S. schools is estimated to be between 5 and 15% (Kronenberger & Meyer, 2001). According to Statistics Canada (2006), 3.2% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 years are affected by a learning disability. Nearly 90% of students diagnosed with exceptionalities have learning disabilities, and most of these students will have difficulties with reading (Harwell & Jackson, 2008). According to Mody (2004), it is believed that 5 to 7% of the population experience reading and or language impairments. One in four children from families with middle-class socioeconomic status have difficulty with phonological awareness unless provided with an instructional program, with this statistic being greater for children from families with lower socioeconomic status (Gunning, 2000). Phonological awareness has been found to have a strong positive correlation to reading, writing, and language (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998).



Teaching phonological awareness can provide a strong foundation in order to minimize reading and/or language difficulties (Troia, 2004).

During the preschool years, phonological awareness is inseparable from basic language proficiency (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). The connection between reading and spoken language is so prominent that reading difficulties have been linked to impairment in one or more areas of spoken language (Mann, 2003). Seventy percent of struggling readers with phonological processing difficulties have also been found to have deficits in areas of language development (Dickinson et al., 2004). Delayed phonological development is often seen in young children with early language delay (Gleason & Ratner, 2009), and individuals with poor speech discrimination skills are likely to struggle with phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998). While the connections between reading and spoken language are often difficult to tease apart, phonological awareness serves as a foundation for both of these skills.

There is a reciprocal relationship between phonological awareness, reading, and writing (Gunning, 2000; Hintze et al., 2003; Hogan et al., 2005; Snow et al., 1998).

Indeed, phonological awareness is the best predictor for reading success in young children (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

Kindergarten students' performance on phonological awareness tasks is the best predictor of their grade 1 and grade 2 reading abilities (Troia, 2004). Phonological awareness measurements collected in primary grades offer information about future word reading abilities better than any measure of current word reading (Hogan et al., 2005). In addition, strong phonological awareness and the ability to correspond letters to sounds predict school success (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ferraz, Pocinho, Pereira, & Soares, 2012).

According to Hogan and her colleagues (Hogan et al., 2005), phonological awareness influences the early stages of reading; however once reading is underway, the process of reading influences phonological awareness. This understanding solidifies the reciprocal relationship between reading and phonological awareness discussed in other literature (Gunning, 2000; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998). These researchers discovered that measures of phonological awareness collected in kindergarten were able to predict word reading as far in advance as grade 2 (Hogan et al., 2005). However, the measurements of phonological awareness collected in grade 2 were not able to accurately predict word reading in grade 4 (Hogan et al., 2005). These findings emphasize the importance of the development of early phonological awareness in order to produce strong readers.

Finally, in order to be successful readers, individuals must understand the alphabetic principle, which cannot be grasped without phonological awareness (Brice & Brice, 2009). The alphabetic principle is the ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to form words (Brice & Brice, 2009). Simply, the alphabetic principle is the application of phonics (O'Connor, 2011). Good phonemic awareness instruction includes using alphabet letters to promote the alphabetic principle (O'Connor, 2011). While some readers will begin to understand the alphabetic principle and letter–sound correspondence without direct instruction, direct instruction is necessary for students with reading difficulties (O'Connor, 2011).

Thus, researchers have clearly established that a deficiency in phonological awareness negatively affects learners' reading abilities (Mody, 2004). A deficit in phonological awareness is a fundamental problem for many poor readers and has been

linked to reading disabilities (Hogan et al., 2005; Mody, 2004; Nicholson, 2004; Siegel, 2003). Most children who have difficulty reading fluently also demonstrate a deficit in their phonological area of language (Brice & Brice, 2009).

Phonological awareness skills have been found to predict the future reading success of children (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). This understanding is supported as the development of phonological awareness is strongly correlated with reading and writing abilities (Dickinson et al., 2004; Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Mann, 2003). Through the information presented, the importance of developing this skill of phonological awareness is evident. However, before implementing intervention strategies to improve phonological awareness, a more formal assessment may be necessary in order to determine the underlying areas of difficulty.

### **Formal Assessment of Phonological Awareness**

The first purpose of assessment is to anticipate problems that may arise for children (Airasian, Engemann, & Gallagher, 2007). In the context of this chapter, such assessment can indicate age-related gaps in children's phonological awareness. Another purpose of assessment is to select the correct procedure, or intervention plan, to assist children to develop critical skills (Airasian et al., 2007). The final function of assessment is to evaluate the results of the interventions such as phonological awareness instruction (Airasian et al., 2007). In order for this to be effective, the assessment must be ongoing and responsive to changes in students' phonological awareness development (Airasian et al., 2007; Hintze et al., 2003).

For the assessment to play an effective role in the children's intervention, it must follow a cyclical process (Airasian et al., 2007). An initial assessment must be completed

in order to discover the nature of effective intervention (Airasian et al., 2007). Then, a plan (intervention) must be created to meet the needs of individual children (Airasian et al., 2007). Finally, the progress of the intervention must be evaluated to determine if changes to the intervention approach are necessary as well as to measure any improvements (Airasian et al., 2007).

In order to assist many individuals with reading and or spoken language difficulties, the assessment of phonological awareness skills must be part of the intervention (Hintze et al., 2003). Assessment is an important element when identifying individuals that possesses inadequate phonological processes or those that are not progressing as expected (Hintze et al., 2003). An assessment of phonological awareness is also beneficial in the early stages of identifying children with reading difficulties (Hintze et al., 2003). After the initial assessment, additional instruction in phonological awareness can be provided (Hintze et al., 2003). The goal of this instruction is to provide enough assistance to individuals so that they can catch up to their peers (Hintze et al., 2003). According to Huang and Invernizzi (2012), achievement gaps can be narrowed over time. However, it is very difficult to close them completely. Therefore, early assessment and intervention are very important (Huang & Invernizzi, 2012).

During the process of this instruction and intervention, ongoing assessment of phonological processes is essential (Hintze et al., 2003). This assessment is necessary to measure the effectiveness of the current instruction as well as the progress of the intervention (Hintze et al., 2003; Invernizzi, Justice, Landrum, & Booker, 2004). Assessment during the intervention can also provide details about individuals' phonological strengths and weaknesses (Hintze et al., 2003). This information allows for

changes in the instruction so that learning gains can be optimized (Hintze et al., 2003; Invernizzi et al., 2004). Finally, ongoing assessment is necessary in order for the instructor to know when phonological awareness is no longer the cause of reading difficulty and the intervention can cease and/or an alternative intervention can be applied (Hintze et al., 2003).

Informal assessments should be completed prior to a formal assessment (such as those discussed later in this chapter) in order to warrant a formal assessment (Gunning, 2000). Perhaps the most powerful tool for informal assessment is observation (Gunning, 2000). Through observing children that demonstrate difficulty understanding basic phonological awareness tasks, reason is provided to recommend completion of formal assessments such as those discussed below. One indication that children are struggling with phonological awareness is that they are not able to recognize rhyme (Gunning, 2000). Another warning sign that children are not developing phonological awareness is that they are unable to distinguish when words possess the same beginning sound (Gunning, 2000). Finally, if children are unable to blend and segment words, this is a signal that would warrant further assessment (Gunning, 2000). Through observing these basic elements of phonological awareness, suggestions can be made for children to seek further assessment and potentially an intervention program (Gunning, 2000).

When assessing phonological awareness there are a variety of tests that can be used in order to measure individuals' abilities in each area of phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000). One method of assessment measures individuals' abilities to detect rhyme using the *Rhyming Sounds Survey* (Gunning, 2000). Other surveys used for assessment are the *Beginning Sounds Survey* and the *Segmentation Survey* (Gunning,

2000). Though these surveys are effective, one of the best measures of phonological processing is the reading of pseudowords (Siegel, 2003).

Each of the discussed measures of assessment can be used to monitor one specific element of phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, or segmenting; Gunning, 2000). However, there are assessments available that are more comprehensive and measure a variety of skills associated with phonological awareness. These tests require a battery of assessments to be collected in order to determine an overall level of phonological awareness. The following assessments are examples of this type of assessment.

A well-known assessment used to measure phonological awareness is the *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)* (Hintze et al., 2003). This assessment is a norm-referenced test that has demonstrated to be reliable and valid for measuring phonological processing (Hintze et al., 2003). The *CTOPP* has been found to provide a strong relationship with word identification, word analysis, sight word efficiency, phonemic decoding efficiency, as well as reading fluency (Hintze et al., 2003). Each of these skills in turn demonstrates a strong connection to phonological awareness.

The *CTOPP* is used to assess phonological awareness, phonological memory, and rapid naming memory (Hintze et al., 2003). Within these three broad categories there are a total of seven subtests (Hintze et al., 2003). The phonological awareness composite includes three subtests including elision (the deletion of one or more sounds from a word in order to make it easier to pronounce), sound matching, and blending words (Hintze et al., 2003). The phonological memory composite includes two subtests including memory for digits and nonword repetition (Hintze et al., 2003). Finally, the rapid naming

composite includes the last two subtests, rapid object naming and rapid colour naming (Hintze et al., 2003). Through the completion of these subtests, an assessment is produced in order to identify individuals who are behind their peers, determine the strengths and weaknesses of the students, and/or document the progress of an intervention (Hintze et al., 2003).

Another well-known assessment tool used to measure phonological awareness is the *Phonological Abilities Test (PAT)*; Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). This test is comprised of six subtests. Of these six subtests, four are measures of phonological awareness (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The assessment of rhyme is measured through the subtests rhyme detection and rhyme production (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). Rhyme detection requires students to select the word that rhymes with the initial stimulus provided. When completing the rhyme production subtest, students must provide as many rhyming words to the stimulus as possible within 30 seconds (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). Segmentation is assessed using the subtests of word completion and phoneme deletion. Word completion asks students to finish the final syllable or phoneme of a word (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). Phoneme deletion requires students to remove the phoneme at the beginning or end of the word (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The final two subtests are to assess speech rate and letter knowledge (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). During the assessment of speech rate, students repeat the word "buttercup" 10 times with their response rate timed. Letter knowledge requires that students provide a name or sound to each letter in the alphabet (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012).

Another type of assessment is the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*; Hintze et al., 2003). This assessment is generally used for students in kindergarten and grade 1 (Hintze et al., 2003). The *DIBELS* uses short fluency measures to monitor the development of prereading and early reading skills. These skills include phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, automaticity, and fluency (Hintze et al., 2003). This assessment is comprised of three subtests including: letter naming fluency, initial sound fluency, and phonemic segmentation fluency (Hintze et al., 2003). When assessing letter naming fluency, students are randomly provided with lower case and upper case letters (Hintze et al., 2003). Students are asked to name as many letters as they are able to within one minute (Hintze et al., 2003). Initial sound fluency is measured by providing students with a target sound. Based on this sound, students must identify a picture that displays a word beginning with the target sound from a series of pictures provided (Hintze et al., 2003). Finally, the students are asked to segment three- and four-syllable words into individual phonemes in order to assess their phoneme segmentation fluency (Hintze et al., 2003).

Finally, a formal assessment created specifically for children in kindergarten is *Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS-K)*, recognizing that these children's literacy skills are still maturing and that this is an ideal time for early intervention (Invernizzi et al., 2004). The three main goals of this assessment are to identify children that require early literacy intervention programs, create a guide for teachers to develop early literacy enhancement strategies to be used in the classroom, and document the effectiveness of intervention provided to children who require additional instruction



(Invernizzi et al., 2004). This assessment is conducted twice each year, in the fall and spring, in order to monitor changes in the students' literacy skills (Invernizzi et al., 2004).

*PALS-K* is composed of six subtasks that measure children's literacy skills in four areas including phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge/letter recognition, word concept (ability to segment sentences into words), and letter–sound correspondence (Invernizzi et al., 2004). Phonological awareness is measured using two activities: by asking children to choose the correct rhyming word based on a stimulus image and by asking them to identify the word that shares the same initial phoneme as a visual stimulus (Invernizzi et al., 2004). Alphabet knowledge is assessed by asking children to name lower case letters presented randomly (Invernizzi et al., 2004). Assessment of children's word concept involves asking them to memorize a short nursery rhyme and to repeat the rhyme while pointing to the corresponding words (Invernizzi et al., 2004). Two tasks are used to assess letter–sound correspondence; the first asks students to produce the correct sound associated with a series of upper case letters and digraphs (Invernizzi et al., 2004). The second requires students to spell five high-frequency, one-syllable words (Invernizzi et al., 2004).

Students who demonstrate low scores on such assessments are candidates for instructional interventions intended to improve the phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000). Beginning intervention early is key to targeting phonological processing and ultimately reading difficulties (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; Mody, 2004).

### **Phonological Awareness Interventions**

A great deal of organization and planning are required for phonological interventions to be successful (Phillips et al., 2008). In many instances incidental or

implicit instruction alone will not suffice for individuals that struggle with phonological awareness. Instead, direct instruction becomes necessary (Phillips et al., 2008). When developing an intervention strategy, it is important to establish a routine and structure (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; van Kleeck, 2004). This ensures that the children understand the expectations and the activities that will take place. Above all, when creating an intervention plan in order to improve phonological awareness there are three key concepts: it should be fun, interactive, and developmentally appropriate (Brice & Brice, 2009).

**General principles for effective instruction and intervention.** When implementing phonological interventions it is important to provide instructional sequencing for students that follow a logical progression (Phillips et al., 2008). This means that the instructor must plan ahead to organize instructional content and processes (Ferraz et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2008). As these intervention plans are implemented, it is imperative that there is a component of review and task repetition in order for mastery of the knowledge and skills of phonological awareness to occur (Phillips et al., 2008). To aid in the mastery of these skills it is important that intervention occurs in multiple settings (Phillips et al., 2008). This is an essential component of phonological awareness interventions in order for learners to gain proficiency and understanding of phonological awareness (Phillips et al., 2008).

Providing feedback to students is another important aspect of intervention strategies (Cambourne, 1995; Phillips et al., 2008). Feedback should be specific, positive, frequent, and immediate to be most effective (Cambourne, 1995; Phillips et al., 2008). Furthermore, it is important to consider whether the difficulties that students face are due

to lack of knowledge or lack of attentiveness (Phillips et al., 2008). When providing feedback to address challenges regarding lack of knowledge, it is important to consider how children may have interpreted a task incorrectly and address that in the feedback provided (Phillips et al., 2008). However, when providing feedback to children who have difficulties due to lack of attentiveness, it is important to address this issue and develop strategies to improve attentiveness during the intervention (Phillips et al., 2008). Making this distinction before providing feedback can ensure that the feedback is delivered in the most constructive manner (Phillips et al., 2008).

Scaffolding bases the type and level of instruction provided on the progress and behaviour of the children (Shaffer et al., 2005). The instruction should increase gradually in difficulty and build on children's current understanding (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Shaffer et al., 2005). As children achieve success, the responsibility is released until they are able to complete the task independently (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Shaffer et al., 2005). According to Phillips et al. (2008), there are several methods of scaffolding that can be used successfully during phonological interventions. The first method is developing and using consistent hand signals within the intervention (Phillips et al., 2008). The most obvious and common example of this is clapping the syllables of a word; however, this can be expanded to use physical movements that represent putting sounds together or taking them apart (Phillips et al., 2008). The second method of scaffolding that has been found to be beneficial in interventions is using visual representations (Phillips et al., 2008). Providing students with visual stimuli can produce greater understanding and develop learners' phonological awareness (Phillips et al., 2008).

Elkonin boxes or blocks are an example of visual representations that can be used as scaffolds for students to understand two concepts of phonological awareness: blending and segmentation (Gunning, 2000). They are also effective when adding sounds and deleting sounds, as some blocks can be left empty for students to fill in verbally with the appropriate sounds (Gunning, 2000). Alphabet books, especially those that incorporate letter and sound information together, can be used as an effective means of improving phonological awareness and ultimately phonemic awareness (Gunning, 2000; Murray, 2006; van Kleeck, 2004). When using alphabet books as a resource for the development of phonemic awareness, it is important that explicit connections are made between the letters and the phonemes (Murray, 2006; van Kleeck, 2004). It is helpful for interaction between teachers and learners to occur in order to facilitate an understanding of the letter–phoneme relationship and make it memorable (Murray, 2006; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). These interactions can include but are not limited to questioning and discussion. Finally, it is valuable for learners to have the opportunity to practice hearing, recognizing, and creating these sounds (Murray, 2006). Reading and spelling also promote the development of phonological awareness (Troia, 2004). While there are a variety of intervention techniques, explicit instruction is most beneficial for individuals that struggle with phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

As previously mentioned, rhyme is an important component of phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000). Nursery rhymes can be used in order to support the development of this skill, as they are accessible to a range of learners and provide a nonthreatening introduction and ability to work with the concept of rhyme (Gunning,

2000). Rhyming games and songs can also be used to encourage learners to understand and identify rhyme (Brice & Brice, 2009).

There are varying levels of phonological awareness difficulties that need to be considered during intervention including the depth of the phonological unit, position of the unit in a stimulus word, number of units in the stimulus word, stimulus word frequency, and task type (Troia, 2004). For example, a high-frequency word is easier to manipulate as individuals likely have already completed a segmental analysis and the information is encoded within their long-term memory (Troia, 2004). It also is important to work within children's zones of proximal development in order to create the best progress (van Kleeck, 2004). As with teaching many skills, scaffolding and modeling are necessary in order for learners to be able to understand the concept as well as be able to apply what they know spontaneously (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009).

**Specific phonological awareness intervention strategies.** Phonological awareness interventions that are movement based produce better results than traditional in-class, techniques where students are limited to their desk space (Rule, Dockstader, & Stewart, 2006). One nontraditional technique involves emphasizing verbal/kinesthetic activities (Rule et al., 2006). This particular intervention was carried out in one study in whole group settings and small group settings where the children participated in activities such as card games with verbal and written components, songs, movement games, and pantomimes (Rule et al., 2006). The other nontraditional method in this study focused on tactile or hands-on activities (Rule et al., 2006). In this intervention, the focus was largely on the manipulation of objects as well as print providing visual representation (Rule et al., 2006). The intervention used as a control for the study was a traditional "pullout"

program where an instructor temporarily removes students from their regular classrooms in order to focus on phonological awareness development (Rule et al., 2006). In a "pullout" program the activities are largely print and worksheet based, with students usually limited to the space at their desks (Rule et al., 2006).

According to the study conducted by Rule et al. (2006), the verbal/kinesthetic activities as well as tactile/manipulation activities produced greater improvements than standard lessons completed during classroom removal time. These gains were further enhanced by making connections between activities and the real world, thus making the material more meaningful to the students (Rule et al., 2006). Though these nontraditional intervention styles produced greater gains in phonological awareness, they can also serve as a supplement to reinforce classroom materials (Rule et al., 2006).

The *Phonological Awareness Programme (PAP)* is another phonological awareness intervention (Ferraz et al., 2012). This program is targeted towards children between the ages of 4 and 6 years (Ferraz et al., 2012). The program duration is 8 weeks, with one session occurring each week (Ferraz et al., 2012). The sessions are approximately 30 minutes in length and are conducted in small groups consisting of three to four students (Ferraz et al., 2012). There are seven types of games that are incorporated into the program, with three used in any one session (Ferraz et al., 2012). The games include a variety of different tasks designed to improve and enhance the students' understanding of phonological awareness (Ferraz et al., 2012). These tasks included lexical segmentation (natural pauses in spoken language), separation of syllables and phonemes in words, omission of syllables and phonemes in words, recognition and matching between words as a function of initial syllable and/or final syllable, counting

the syllables in a word, decomposing words into a sequence of syllables, and omission of syllables in words (Ferraz et al., 2012). Each of these tasks were developed into "games," with most using visual stimuli in order to enhance the students' learning and provide a level of scaffolding (Ferraz et al., 2012). While these tasks gradually evolved and increased in difficulty, their purpose or function remained the same (Ferraz et al., 2012).

According to postintervention findings, the students that participated in the study made greater progress in phonological awareness than those who were receiving only phonological instruction in their classrooms (Ferraz et al., 2012). In fact, in some cases students who were not involved in *PAP* were found to have regressed in their phonological awareness (Ferraz et al., 2012). This regression may reflect teaching instruction received or a greater focus placed on developing other skills (Ferraz et al., 2012).

In a study completed by Fielding-Barnsley and Hay (2012), components from Hatcher's (2000) *Sound Linkage* program as well as Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley's (1991) *Sound Foundations* program were integrated into an 8-week intervention program. The instruction of phonological awareness provided was systematic and explicit throughout 16 sessions of 30 minutes (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The students were placed in small groups of four or five children, and the intervention was provided outside the classroom (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The instruction taught the students about syllables, rhyme, and phonemes (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The goal of the lessons was to improve the students' analysis of speech sounds and apply this knowledge to reading and writing (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012).

The results of this study concluded that there is great value in instruction that is provided explicitly and systematically (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). This value can be observed through gains in phonological awareness, oral language, and early reading abilities (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012). The benefits of this type of intervention were apparent as these students made larger improvements than students who were not provided with phonological awareness interventions (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012).

The successful interventions carried out by Rule et al. (2006), Ferraz et al. (2012), and Fielding-Barnsley and Hay (2012) are similar in that they established a routine for the students to follow (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; van Kleeck, 2004). The interventions were also well planned and thought out, providing a logical progression for the students to move from simple concepts to more complex ones (Phillips et al., 2008). The importance of activity-based instruction (visual aids and kinesthetic actions) was stressed rather than traditional instruction without movement and manipulation (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008). Finally, a focus was placed upon developing skills that were transferable and could be used in multiple settings outside the intervention situation (Phillips et al., 2008).

In some cases direct instruction is necessary in order for children to develop the fundamental skills of phonological awareness (Phillips et al., 2008). The essential components of an intervention are to establish a routine (Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; van Kleeck, 2004) and make the intervention fun, interactive, and developmentally appropriate (Brice & Brice, 2009). In order for the intervention to be most successful and transferable into other settings, it should take place in a variety of settings in order to



promote children's understanding that this knowledge is not limited to one specific activity or place (Phillips et al., 2008).

### **Literacy Practices in the Home Environment**

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the natural environment that children are raised in has the strongest influence on their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). Natural environments are defined as sets of structures with which children have a reciprocal relationship including, families, schools, communities, and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). The environments are divided into various levels, beginning with those that are immediately connected to the children, fanning outwards to those that are further removed from the children (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). The levels are named accordingly from the microsystem (the immediate setting), fanning outwards to the mesosystem (connections between immediate settings), exosystem (social systems that are not directly experienced), and the macrosystem (larger cultural context; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). The focus in this chapter will be on the microsystem, as it is the most influential layer in the early stages of children's development and correlates with the early, preschool years that are the focus of this handbook.

At the level of the microsystem, dynamic interactions are created (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). For most children, this level begins with their family (Shaffer et al., 2005). As individuals develop, so do their microsystems, and other structures become included in this system and it becomes more complex (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). Common elements of this system include schools, daycares, and neighbourhoods (Shaffer et al., 2005). As Bronfenbrenner begins by examining the

microsystem and its importance, the value of the family and the interaction between parents and children are of critical importance to the microsystem (Shaffer et al., 2005). Parent engagement is critical for the development of children's early literacy (Shaffer et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Parent engagement recognizes the role of parents as being shared with teachers rather than placing parents and teachers in a hierarchy where teachers are identified as being the most influential or "in charge" of children's education (Shaffer et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This is especially important for young children, as they spend a great deal of time within their microsystem, which initially usually consists of their families (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

Based on the knowledge of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, best practices in early literacy consider children as individuals within their family environment rather than as isolated individuals (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This demonstrates the influence that the family and home have in the development of early literacy skills for young children (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Snow et al. (1998) encourage interventions implemented by parents as one component to foster emergent literacy.

Evidence supports that a strong home literacy environment benefits children's early school performances and higher academic performances (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Early literacy researchers emphasize the importance of the home literacy environment (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Snow et al., 1998; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Family literacy programs that engage parents can result in improvements in students' language and literacy development (Doyle & Zhang, 2011).

The home literacy environment is composed of both direct/explicit and indirect/implicit teaching (Justice, Kaderavek, Bowles, & Grimm, 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Indirect teaching is demonstrated through conversation and incidental reading and writing tasks such as writing a grocery list or reading a bedtime story (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Play-based learning activities and games are excellent ways for parents to provide instruction to their children in the home environment (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This can include outdoor games as well as games using technology (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Direct teaching is sometimes also necessary and occurs through activities such as teaching the alphabet song and storybook reading (Justice et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

Children's home literacy environments can vary greatly (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). According to Wasik and Hendrickson (2004), the environment is dependent on the parent, the child, their relationship, and the home environment. For the purpose of this literature review, the parent–child relationship and home environment will be the primary elements of focus.

### **Parent-Child Relationships**

Most parents are eager to assist their children develop literacy skills but in many cases do not know how (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Doyle and Zhang (2011) developed and implemented a program to provide the necessary assistance for parents to develop their children's literacy skills. According to Doyle and Zhang (2011), parents who participated in a program to promote early literacy in their children were seeking out ways to help their children at home. The program constructed by Doyle and Zhang (2011) provided take-home materials to bridge the learning from the

structured sessions to develop literacy skills into similar session, that can be used in the home environment, with many parents finding this component of the program appealing. Parents also found it beneficial to understand why home literacy practices were important as well as how to effectively implement these practices with their children (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). The parents in the study were motivated by the common goal of supporting the development of their children's literacy (Doyle & Zhang, 2011).

The engagement of parents in promoting and developing their children's early literacy skills is crucial to their children's literacy success (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; van Kleeck, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). The provision of positive and authentic parent–child literacy experiences are invaluable learning experiences for preschoolers (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Early language and literacy skills are developed through human interactions, making the parent–children relationship essential in order to develop these skills (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). It is important that these interactions begin to occur at an early age before children enter school and receive formal training (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

Parents using authentic literacy experiences to promote development and growth must make sure that they are working in the children's zone of proximal development (Skibbe et al., 2004). In other words, at the lowest limit the children can achieve success independently and at the highest level they can achieve success with maximal parental support (Skibbe et al., 2004). This idea of scaffolding, creating success with assistance transitioning to success alone, becomes important in order for growth to occur (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Skibbe et al., 2004). According to Skibbe et al. (2004), there are two main

types of scaffolding that are readily available to parents in the home, directive and responsive. Directive scaffolding requires children to produce a specific answer to a question (Skibbe et al., 2004). Directive scaffolding is generally found to be overused and can slow children's progression towards independence as they are often restricted in their responses (Skibbe et al., 2004). Responsive scaffolding elicits a greater level of required thinking and connections to be made between previous understanding and new information (Skibbe et al., 2004). Responsive scaffolding is preferred as it encourages children to participate in higher level thinking rather than a basic question–answer response (Skibbe et al., 2004).

There is a clear positive relationship between the number of words children are exposed to, verbally and in print, and the size of their vocabulary (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). The parent–child relationship plays an influential role in this exposure at the preschool level (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Children's first introduction to language usually occurs in the home through their parents (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). If the parents and children spend quality time interacting with each other, children will likely benefit from the experience of being spoken to directly (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

### **At-Home Literacy Experiences**

One of the most popular methods used to develop and build parent–child relationship and share interactions with literacy is to share storybook reading (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Storybook reading allows parents and children to engage in an authentic and comfortable experience where they can begin to develop basic literacy skills (Skibbe et al., 2004). Storybook reading has been shown to increase language skills including phonological awareness, the size of the children's vocabulary, oral language,

print-based language, and the quality of their receptive language skills (Justice et al., 2005; Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar, & Harris, 2000; van Kleeck, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Storybook reading also allows children to create positive and entertaining experiences with literacy and create an interest in reading (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). These experiences will translate into other positive experiences as children enter school and engage in other forms of literacy and text (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). When children experience early positive experiences with literacy and print, they learn that text can be entertaining as well as connect them to the world, including their families and communities (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Cambourne, 1995).

In order to maximize the development of language skills and support reading when participating in in-home activities it is important to provide parents with some direction (van Kleeck, 2004) as well as practical and easy-to-implement activities (Cambourne, 1995; Doyle & Zhang, 2011). For instance, children need to do more than just listen (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Examples of these activities may include pointing or naming an object on the page, predicting the outcome of the story, or talking about the relationships between the characters. These activities also promote the development of language as well as interactions between the parent and child to promote early literacy (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

### **Parental Involvement in the Development of Phonological Awareness**

The home literacy environment plays an important role in young children's literacy experiences and contributes to the development of phonological sensitivity (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). With this understanding, it is important that home-based

phonological interventions are available to provide support for children with deficits in phonological awareness. Interventions specifically designed to target phonological awareness of preschoolers may help children prepare and perform better in kindergarten (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). In many instances parents are eager to help their children develop literacy skills but do not know how (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Research suggests that parents rarely use reading behaviours known to enhance the phonological awareness of their children, even though they do participate in reading to their children (Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). The next section describes some tasks and activities that parents can complete in order to develop their children's phonological awareness using empirically validated interventions.

Storybook reading has been found to be an excellent medium to deliver phonological interventions to preschoolers (Ukrainetz et al., 2000). Justice et al. (2005) conducted a 10-week study on home-based, parent-implemented phonological awareness interventions. During the course of this study the parents implemented two specific phonological awareness tasks after completing storybook reading (Justice et al., 2005). The first was a rhyme awareness task, and the second was a beginning sound awareness task (Justice et al., 2005). The tasks were simple in nature, following a "search and find" method or a question and answer approach (Justice et al., 2005). This type of intervention was shown to improve children's rhyme awareness and alliteration skills (the use of the same sound at the beginning of words such as bear, boat, big); however the success in the rhyme awareness category was much greater (Justice et al., 2005). This difference likely reflects that rhyming skills usually develop prior to alliteration ones in most children

(Justice et al., 2005). Parents were also able to enjoy storybook reading with their children, finding it meaningful, interesting, and motivating (Justice et al., 2005).

Stadler and McEvoy (2003) compared the role of two different types of texts when developing phonological awareness. The types of texts under examination were alphabet books and narrative storybooks (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Parents of preschool children were given one of each type of book and asked to read it with their children, with these interactions recorded (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). The results displayed that the type of book read influenced how the parents shared the book with their children and the learning that occurred (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003).

Narrative books encouraged emphasis on the content of the book, such as the characters and pictures (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). On the other hand, alphabet books have been found to be beneficial to use in the home literacy environment in order to promote the learning of letters, sounds, and the letter–sound correspondence (Murray, 2006; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; van Kleeck, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). In this study, the alphabet books elicited promoting a higher rate of phonological awareness and print concepts as well as some conversation about text content (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Overall, more time was spent with the alphabet books as both content and form were endorsed (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). Thus, the type of book chosen to share with children influences the type of learning that ensues, with alphabet books providing an excellent medium to support the skill of phonological awareness (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003).

Parents are looking for a way to help their children develop early literacy skills but are unsure where to begin (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).



Storybook reading provides them with an excellent launching pad to create authentic and comfortable learning experiences to develop basic literacy skills, including phonological awareness (Skibbe et al., 2004). The type of storybook in part influences children's learning experiences, with alphabet books lending themselves well to the development of phonological awareness (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003).

### **Developing a Parent Handbook for Phonological Awareness**

Phonological awareness is strongly and positively correlated to reading, writing, and language (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998). Basic language abilities are inseparable from phonological awareness during the preschool years (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). In young children phonological awareness is found to be the best predictor of children's reading success (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). The connection between phonological awareness, language, and reading is undeniable. As a result, deficits in phonological awareness can also lead to deficits in language development (Dickinson et al., 2004) as well as reading (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). Promoting phonological awareness can provide a foundation that minimizes reading and/or language difficulties (Troia, 2004).

In many instances phonological awareness begins to develop naturally around the age of 2 years (Justice, 2010). This natural development occurs through word play, print exposure, and reading instruction (Troia, 2004), with rhyming and segmenting skills usually developing before blending ones (Justice, 2010). However, in some cases the fundamental skills of phonological awareness do not develop typically, in which case instruction and intervention are necessary. As parents are usually the most important

influence in children's early development (Shaffer et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004), one of the goals of the handbook is to provide them with the knowledge and necessary instruction to develop their children's phonological awareness.

Human interaction is necessary in order for early language and early literacy skills to develop effectively (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). At the preschool level, children's first experiences occur with their parents; therefore it is essential for parents to develop a relationship with their children that promotes early literacy skills to develop (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Research demonstrates that a strong home-literacy environment benefits children's performance in school (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Brofenbrenner's ecological systems theory suggests that children's microsystem (composed of parents) is perhaps the most important developmental factor (Shaffer et al., 2005). According to Snow et al. (1998), best practices that foster emergent literacy include parent-implemented interventions. For these reasons, it is essential that parents are involved in the development of early literacy skills including phonological awareness. Therefore, the target audience for the handbook is parents of children between preschool and grade 1 who are looking to promote the development of phonological awareness; prior to the use of the handbook the children may be developing phonological awareness skills typically or atypically.

Most parents are keen to promote literacy skills within their children; however, in many instances parents are not educated about how to achieve success in this area (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Studies have found that even parents who read to their children rarely engage in behaviours that enhance phonological awareness (Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). The handbook aims to provide a resource

for parents with ready-to-use, authentic activities that will support their existing efforts and knowledge of their children's early literacy efforts and that they can complete with their children in order to promote their phonological awareness.

Through a comprehensive literature review as well as input from professionals, the goal of the handbook is to create a product that encourages parents to promote phonological awareness through authentic, entertaining learning experiences that they can engage in with their children. A unique feature of the handbook is that the learning experiences are authentic and are not based on worksheets. That is, the activities are centred on everyday activities and play. The handbook intends to provide detailed activities and ideas for parents to advance children's phonological awareness. Though the handbook does not claim to produce an exhaustive list of activities, extension activities also will be included, providing parents with the opportunity to manipulate and shape instruction as needed once they are familiar with the types of exercises that typically promote phonological awareness. As parents are crucial in the development of children's literacy skills, including phonological awareness, yet are generally unaware about how to promote such activities at home, the development of this handbook seems especially relevant in promoting children's early reading and language success.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the methodology used to create a handbook designed for parents of children between preschool and grade 1 with typical or atypical language development, to develop the phonological awareness of their children. The chapter is divided into different sections providing information regarding the rationale for the project, curriculum design, and limitations of the handbook.

#### **Rationale**

Simply defined, phonological awareness is the manipulation of the sounds of speech separated from their meaning (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). In many instances children develop phonological awareness through authentic experiences as well as informal reading instruction (Troia, 2004). However, when this is not the case, targeted phonological awareness instruction is recommended (Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000).

Phonological awareness is a fundamental skill that is necessary for language and reading to develop successfully (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998). The strong positive correlation between phonological awareness and language/reading demonstrates the importance of fostering phonological awareness. Similarly, developing this skill can minimize reading and language difficulties (Troia, 2004).

In young children, phonological awareness has been found to be the best predictor for reading success (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). As a result, early interventions to improve phonological awareness are imperative. These

interventions should be fun, interactive, and developmentally appropriate (Brice & Brice, 2009). This handbook aims to meet all three criteria.

The home literacy environment has a great influence on the development of children's literacy skills (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). According to Doyle and Zhang (2011), literacy programs that involve parents can improve children's language and literacy development substantially. It is important to view children as individuals within a family versus isolated individuals (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory presents the relationship between developing individuals and their natural environment (Shaffer et al., 2005). He argues the importance of the parents, as they are part of young children's most inner influential structure, the microsystem (Shaffer et al., 2005). His theory supports the important role of parents in developing children's early literacy skills, including phonological awareness. Using this understanding, the phonological awareness handbook developed in this project aims to provide parents with a resource that they can use to help develop their children's phonological awareness and ultimately their language and reading abilities.

Many parents are eager to help their children develop literacy skills but are not equipped with the most appropriate or most effective tools and knowledge to do so successfully (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). For example, many parents know that reading to their children is beneficial for developing basic literacy skills. However, these same parents are unaware of associated activities that they can use in order to promote further literacy skills, including phonological awareness. Rarely do parents use behaviours known to promote greater phonological awareness of their child

(Skibbe et al., 2004; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). The goal of this handbook is to fill the gap within parents' knowledge and young children's skill repertoire.

Specifically, the intention of the handbook is to present parents with a resource that familiarizes them with the concept of phonological awareness as well as underscores its role in the development of children's literacy. The handbook will be unique as it moves away from traditional interventions involving paper, pencil, and worksheets. The aim is to provide parents with authentic activities that can be used in order to enhance children's phonological awareness in the home literacy environment.

### **Research Design: Development of the Handbook**

The development of the handbook required an extensive understanding of the current literature available and was conducted in two sections, reviewing phonological awareness development and the role of the home literacy environment. The literature reviewed came from academic sources including edited books as well as journal articles. Many of the journal articles were found using databases such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and Education Search Complete.

The objective of the literature review was to situate this project in a wide body of knowledge (Creswell, 2013). The information that was researched provided background knowledge about the fundamental aspects of the project (phonological awareness and home-literacy development). A review of current studies completed in these areas was also completed in order to establish an understanding of current intervention strategies as well as best practices. A literature review is also essential for this project in order to identify and meet existing gaps in the literature (Creswell, 2013), in this case, providing parents with information about phonological awareness and authentic home-based

activities that can promote associated skills. A search through the available literature determined a need for the project, as parents are looking for ways to improve their children's literacy but are not able to find effective tools (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This handbook is intended to help reduce the lack of knowledge transition between professionals and parents.

To begin the literature review an understanding of phonological awareness was established in order for the rest of the information to be grounded in the fundamentals of the topic. Stemming from phonological awareness, phonemic awareness was researched in order for a greater depth of understanding to be provided. The connection between reading difficulties and phonological awareness was explored. Current phonological awareness assessment tools as well as intervention programs were examined.

The second section of the literature review revolved around literacy practices in the home environment, with this section embedded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Shaffer et al., 2005), placing parents at the core of developing early literacy skills. Current literature surrounding the importance of parent-child relationships as well as the role of at-home literacy experiences was reviewed in order to understand the influence of parental interventions within the home. Finally, in order to connect phonological awareness to early home-literacy practices, parental involvement in the development of phonological awareness was examined in order to gain an understanding of preexisting programs as well as best practices.

A review of the literature surrounding evidence-based interventions was conducted to understand best practices and available interventions within the school environment as well as home-based interventions. This knowledge is incorporated into

the handbook in order to provide parents with suggestions about authentic experience that they can use to support their children's phonological awareness development.

### **Research Design: Review of the Handbook**

Professionals were invited to review a working outline of the handbook in order to provide formative and summative feedback. These individuals were chosen using the data collection procedure known as purposeful selection (Creswell, 2013). The aim of this process is to have candidates that are best suited to provide valuable information about the topic at hand (Creswell, 2013).

The professionals chosen are elementary school teachers that have experience working with children with language and reading difficulties. The teachers teach at the primary level in a kindergarten program that is specialized in developing language skills in order to prepare students for grade 1. The two teachers that reviewed the handbook work alongside each other in this classroom and have several years of experience working in this program. The program focuses heavily on developing early language and reading skills using a variety of different techniques; some strategies follow traditional intervention, while others revolve around capitalizing on authentic experiences. For example, traditional strategies include vocabulary books and flash cards. However, more focus is placed on the authentic learning experiences developed by the teachers in the classroom. These activities include the use of gestures, play-based literacy activities, and games to promote emerging literacy skills (including phonological awareness).

The two professionals evaluated the structure, clarity, parental accessibility, practical application, as well as the overall effectiveness of the handbook. When looking at the structure, the professionals considered the layout of the handbook and the



organization of the information. The clarity and parental accessibility refers to how easily specific information can be located within the handbook as well as the language used throughout the document. The practical application and overall effectiveness of the handbook assesses whether the document is useful.

The suggestions provided by the teachers were considered and incorporated into working drafts of the handbook and carried through into the final project. The same professionals were invited to review the final version of the handbook in order to increase the overall face validity of the document (Creswell, 2013).

The validity of a project is determined by its ability to convey the findings in a meaningful way and convince the reader of its accuracy (Creswell, 2013). In the case of this project, face validity can be measured by the ability of the handbook to complete its intended goal—to provide parents with a tool that will help them develop the phonological awareness of their children through authentic learning experiences. Although face validity is a subjective measure, it is enhanced when completed by people that have expertise in the area (Creswell, 2013).

These teachers were chosen due to their expertise in the development of children's language and reading processes as well as their knowledge of current intervention practices. As part of their role the teachers have an established relationship with the parent community. This includes parents of children with typical and atypical phonological development between preschool and grade 1, which is the targeted audience of the handbook. Their role as teachers of young children requires ongoing communication with parents to occur. Through this communication, the teachers have

gained knowledge about what parents want and/or need to assist their children with early literacy skills.

The professionals were contacted to participate in this project. After their consent they were provided with an electronic copy of the working outline of the handbook. They were also provided with the categories to consider when reading the outline of the handbook including structure, clarity, accessibility to parents, the practical application, as well as the overall effectiveness. Professionals were provided with an electronic copy of the revised handbook.

### **Limitations**

This project was somewhat limited in scope as the feedback from the professionals came from individuals working in the same school. Furthermore, the teachers that provided feedback for the draft of the handbook worked within the same program in the school. Although their work in this program makes these specific individuals qualified to evaluate the handbook, it does not lend itself to providing a range of varied opinions based on differing experiences. As these teachers worked in the same program, they worked with the same students and their experiences are somewhat limited to this small sample of students struggling with language and early literacy skills, including phonological awareness.

In order to combat this, a larger sample of teachers with a variety of experiences and backgrounds could have been used. A larger sample of professionals would have provided more depth to the feedback collected. With more teachers providing feedback from a greater variety of backgrounds, a wider range of experiences and knowledge could have been incorporated into the review and further development of the handbook.

The lack of parental feedback collected and incorporated into the handbook presents another limitation to the handbook. Although the intended audience of the handbook was parents, parents were never contacted to provide feedback and input into the development of the resource. Instead, the teachers were expected to have developed sufficient understanding of parents' needs through their professional experiences in order to provide feedback that was inclusive of the parental perspective.

A next step in this project in order to reduce this limitation would be to gain feedback from educators working in a variety of classroom settings and parents. This feedback would be based less on the technical aspects of the handbook and the information within it but focused more on the clarity of the information as well as the practicality and usefulness of the handbook. Such a review would strengthen the utility of the handbook as it would be validated by professionals as well as by end users.

Due to the language used throughout the handbook that was created, the parent audience that can effectively utilize this resource may be somewhat limited. For parents to be able to read and apply the information and activities in this handbook they must have an elevated level of literacy themselves. To combat this limitation, the language itself could have been simplified, along with the use of brief summaries to clarify the most important content. The use of images and diagrams could also have been employed more throughout the document for greater accessibility to more parents.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE HANDBOOK**

The handbook was produced in response to the importance of phonological awareness within the development of children's early literacy, including oral language skills and reading. Early literacy development should begin in infancy and mature as children develop. Reading instruction should take place prior to children entering kindergarten. Therefore parents have the greatest influence on the development of young children's literacy skills; for this reason the handbook is designed with parents as the target audience, specifically, parents of typically and atypically developing children between preschool and grade 1. The purpose of this handbook is to foster parent engagement, add to parents' current knowledge about literacy development (specifically phonological awareness), and provide authentic activities to promote the development of phonological awareness. The beginning of the handbook presents the user with foundational information of early literacy, the benefits of phonological awareness, as well as general principles to improve the effectiveness of the activities. The latter portion of the handbook provides a variety of authentic activities that are readily accessible for parents to complete with their children to develop phonological awareness skills. All graphics in the handbook were acquired from Clker.com, unless otherwise stated (Edward, 2011; Kostub, 2012; OCAL, 2010).






# *Promoting Early Reading:*








*A Parent Handbook For Developing  
Children's Phonological Awareness  
Using Authentic Activities*

*Developed By: Stephanie Dunn*

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## *Importance of Early Literacy*

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For the purpose of this handbook, early literacy is understood to be the time period when children learn about the form, content and use of language and reading. During this stage of early literacy, children are not yet able to integrate this knowledge into their reading or writing skills (van Kleeck, 2004). The period of early literacy represents a critical time for introducing the basic elements of literacy to children. Such presentations can be indirect and unintentional, occurring through informal literacy events (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). At the very earliest stages, which can begin in infancy, introduction to basic literacy events can include but are not limited to smiling, talking, and encouraging play (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

The development of children's early literacy takes into account processes that expand much further than the preliminary stages of reading (decoding text; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For example, basic language skills, including speaking and listening, are included within the term early literacy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). These language skills provide a critical foundation for the development of basic reading skills, with both language and reading as critical elements of early literacy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Facilitating children's language skills also can encourage the development of their reading skills (Snow et al., 1998). Initial engagement with language is usually not intentional and often developed through incidental learning experiences (Snow et al., 1998). However as children mature, greater language instruction becomes necessary (Snow et al., 1998).



Reading is the ability to understand and make meaning of text, including symbols (Snow et al., 1998). Early literacy encompasses the development of specific reading skills including letter–sound correspondence, vocabulary, interest in literacy, and phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998). Each of these skills is important when determining children's later academic success (Snow et al., 1998). As a valuable reading skill, phonological awareness is a fundamental building block in order to promote early literacy in children and influences their academic success (Snow et al., 1998). As children develop these early reading skills, their understanding of language moves from a holistic understanding of speech (making meaning of speech) to understanding segments of speech (understanding the individual words and sounds; Snow et al., 1998).

The promotion of early literacy skills at home is a critical element to children's school success (Snow et al., 1998). Ideally, children should participate in activities related to literacy development long before they enter kindergarten, with these activities beginning in infancy and continuing while they attend school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). These activities do not have to be traditional reading and spelling activities; they can include manipulating language while singing or playing games.

Children who struggle with reading at the primary level (grades K–3) may be disadvantaged academically (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Early literacy and reading success are critical to long-term success in school and lifelong learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

## *Who Is This Handbook Designed For?*

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Literacy is valued not only by schools but by communities as a whole (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Therefore, parents share in the responsibility of developing children's basic literacy skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). As a result, this handbook is designed for parents with children ranging from preschool to grade 1. These children may demonstrate typical or atypical development in phonological awareness, meaning all children can benefit from the activities included in this handbook. Parents are children's first and most influential teachers, as the best time for children to begin learning literacy skills is before they enter kindergarten (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

Literacy programs that involve parents can result in improvement in children's language, reading, and overall literacy development (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). However, although most parents are eager to help their children develop basic literacy skills, they may not be aware of how to do so effectively (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This handbook is intended to serve as a resource for parents to add to their knowledge and provide practical solutions to develop early literacy, specifically phonological awareness, in their young children.

## *How To Use This Handbook*




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This handbook provides an overview of phonological awareness. The overview is further divided to include a detailed explanation of three critical components of phonological awareness (rhyming, blending and segmenting), typical development of phonological awareness, importance of phonological awareness development, and the role of parents in developing children's phonological awareness. This section is followed by general principles that can be used to guide the activities that follow in the handbook in order to maximize the learning that occurs in each activity.

The goal of this handbook is to draw upon daily experiences and encourage the use of authentic activities instead of traditional worksheet activities that many handbooks of this type encourage. The activities within the handbook are divided into four sections including activities that can be completed while reading with your child, activities that can be completed while singing songs with your child, carefully constructed games that encourage fun as well as learning and activities that incorporate everyday tasks to develop phonological awareness skills. The aim of this handbook is to use natural experiences that parents and children engage in as part of their daily lives to promote the development of phonological awareness.

Each category is divided into the three main components of phonological awareness: rhyming, blending and segmenting, allowing for the targeting of specific skills. Furthermore, these elements are organized in order of increasing difficulty (rhyming, then blending, then segmenting) to follow the natural progression of

children's learning. Within each of these subsections the activities are also in order of increasing difficulty.

Symbols are located in the top right corner of each activity so that parents can readily flip through the handbook and find an activity that targets a specific element of phonological awareness. These symbols also denote where in the progression of difficulty the activity lies based on the number of symbols present (the more symbols the greater the level of difficulty). The symbols allow the user to access activities geared towards the appropriate element and level at a glance. The symbols used are a cat wearing a hat to denote rhyming (  ), a blender to represent blending (  ) and a circle divided into pieces to designate segmenting (  ).

The activities follow a consistent format for ease of understanding and accessibility. Each activity begins with a brief introduction and is followed by a box titled, "The Activity." This box outlines the instructions necessary to complete the activity. The directions are parent friendly, clear but not too lengthy to read. If external resources are necessary to complete the activity or beneficial to supplement the activity, these are listed after "The Activity" box. The resources include web references as well as relevant books.

At the end of each activity is a colour-coded box based on the element of focus (rhyming is blue, blending is red, segmenting is purple). An extension activity is located in each of these boxes. The extension activity is designed to provide an additional challenge for children after they have experienced success with the initial activity. Extension activities ensure that children continue to be challenged, learning and

building on the knowledge that they have. It is important to remember that in many cases the activities will have to be completed several times and across a number of occasions in order for progress to be demonstrated. Therefore support children and their efforts and be patient as they engage in these learning experiences.

The design of the handbook is created for parents. The categories, levels of difficulty and element of focus are identified clearly within this handbook in order to make it practical and useful. Each activity is designed to provide parents with all the necessary information in the simplest arrangement.

## *Phonological Awareness:*

### *Manipulating Language Removed from Meaning and Print*

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The term phonological awareness describes the appreciation for, and ability to manipulate the sounds of speech (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips, Clancy-Menchetti, & Lonigan, 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). The term *phonological* refers to the structure of words and *awareness* to the sensitivity to the sounds of speech (Murray, 2006). This manipulation of speech occurs separate from the meaning of words and phrases and it is not necessary for meaning to be attached to the speech sounds (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Appreciation and manipulation of speech sounds can be demonstrated in three basic elements including rhyming, blending and segmenting (Gunning, 2000). Just as phonological awareness is removed from meaning, it can also be removed from print (Snow et al., 1998). Children's phonological awareness skills can be developed and practiced anywhere using activities like those outlined in this handbook.

### *Rhyming*

Most people are familiar with the concept of rhyme; however most people are not aware that rhyme is an important component of phonological awareness. Rhyming involves manipulating, or changing, one sound in a word to produce a different word. When demonstrating rhyme for the purpose of phonological awareness it is not necessary for a real word to be produced; a pseudo word (pretend/nonsense word) can be created as long as the understanding of rhyme is evident (Gunning, 2000).

Rhyming tasks can increase in difficulty depending on the portions of the words that are changed (Gunning, 2000). The greater the manipulation or change in the word, the easier the rhyme is to create and recognize (Gunning, 2000). For example, a rhyme can be created by changing an entire syllable (the /cav/ in cavity for gravity), or by changing just one sound in the word (the /s/ in star for tar). The skill of rhyming is usually the first component of phonological awareness that children master (Gunning, 2000).

### *Blending*

Words are created using smaller pieces of speech known as phonemes. The phoneme is the smallest unit of speech (Mody, 2004; Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008). Changing one phoneme can distinguish one word, or nonsense item, from another. For example, in the following string of words, just one phoneme is changed to move from one word to the next: *car, far, fad, tad, tap*. The skill used to bring sounds together to

form a word is known as blending (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Blending is the second of three elements of phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004).

Blending directly contributes to the development of reading, with children using blending as they begin to read and decode texts (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Though blending shares a direct connection with reading, the blending of sounds can be completed verbally and does not require the use of pen, paper or text. Practice blending phonemes can act as a beneficial precursor to formal reading and reading instruction (Gunning, 2000).

### *Segmenting*

Segmenting is the skill of separating words, or nonsense items, into smaller units of speech (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004) or isolating an individual sound in a syllable or a word (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Segmenting can involve separating words into syllables and move towards separating words into individual sounds (phonemes). The element of segmenting can be described as the opposite of blending. For example, segmenting occurs when separating the word, dog, into three distinct sounds or phonemes, /d/ /o/ /g/. Segmenting can also be demonstrated through the removal of part of a word. For example, when asking children to say the word *dog* without the /d/, the correct response would be /og/. Segmenting is the most challenging element of the three components of phonological awareness presented in this handbook as it requires children to hear the distinct sounds within items and then use that understanding and manipulate it in some way (Gunning, 2000; Troia, 2004).

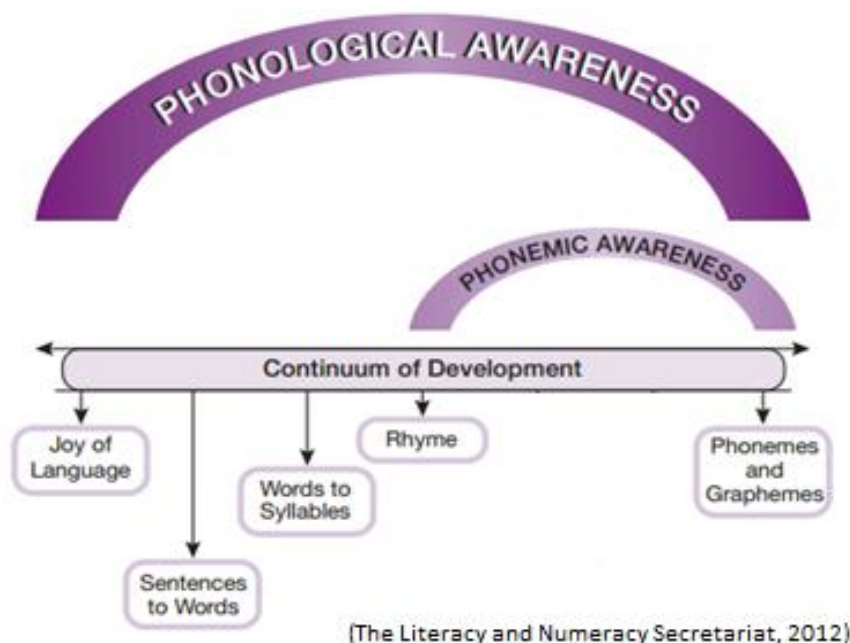


## *Typical Development of Verbal Language and Phonological Awareness: What Should Be Expected?*

Once language growth and development begins, it tends to increase quite quickly in most children (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). At 11 months of age, most children have an understanding of several common words; however they are not yet able to use language to express themselves (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). At this level, many children experience joy in the use of language (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). By the age of two, most children are able to put at least two words together in order to express themselves and convey an idea (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010). Later,

children are able to use these words to create complete sentences and separate individual words within sentences (The Literacy and Numeracy

Secretariat, 2012).



(The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012)

At two years of age, many children also begin to show signs of emerging phonological awareness (Justice, 2010). For instance, the segmenting of words into

syllables as well as understanding of rhyme can be observed in many children (Justice, 2010; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). Most children also demonstrate alliteration or the detection of words with similar beginning sounds (Justice, 2010). Later, children are able to grasp an understanding of phonemes (individual sounds) followed by the association of these sounds to letters (graphemes; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). Though this is the last item depicted in the diagram, phonological awareness continues to develop as children acquire greater experiences with language and literacy (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Justice, 2010). The elements of phonological awareness continue to develop in the order that they can be found in each section of this handbook: rhyming, blending and segmenting (Gunning, 2000).

There are indicators to identify that children are developing phonological awareness prior to beginning school (Gunning, 2000). One indicator is the ability to recognize rhyme (Gunning, 2000). Another is that children should be able to blend and segment words (Gunning, 2000). The goal of this handbook is to aid children in achieving these skills. If children experience ongoing difficulty in either of these areas, greater intervention may be required.

## *The Importance of Developing Phonological Awareness*

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Phonological awareness is a fundamental literacy skill that is rooted within the skills of language (Mann, 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004) and reading (Gunning, 2000; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). Phonological awareness strengthens the development of language and reading. The correlation between phonological awareness and both reading and language are positive, meaning that as one skill improves the other does so as well (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998). As reading and spoken language are closely connected, phonological awareness acts as a precursor, or building block, for both of these skills. Instruction in phonological awareness can minimize difficulties that children may have with reading and/or language (Troia, 2004).

### *Language Benefits*

In the early years as children begin to develop, both phonological awareness and basic language abilities are closely connected (Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). Children who struggle with one of these skills often struggle with the other (Gleason & Ratner, 2009; Snow et al., 1998). For example, slower development of phonological awareness is often present in children with delayed language development (Gleason & Ratner, 2009). Similarly, children who have difficulty recognizing distinct parts of speech often struggle with developing phonological awareness (Snow et al., 1998). Language development and phonological awareness have a reciprocal relationship; therefore if one skill can be improved, the other will also improve.

As there is a clear connection between the development of phonological awareness and language acquisition, developing children's phonological awareness skills will usually improve their language abilities. Oral language proficiency (speaking and listening) is part of early literacy and is essential to becoming an effective reader (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Speaking and listening skills are needed in order to develop both reading and writing skills as they provide children with the knowledge of basic structures and rules that language follows (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). By completing tasks intended to promote phonological awareness, oral language skills can be improved.

### *Reading Benefits*

When children learn to read there are a variety of skills that they need to acquire in order to become successful. One of these essential skills is phonological awareness (Gunning, 2000; Nicholson, 2004; Phillips, et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). The connection between phonological awareness and reading is reciprocal (Hogan, Catts, & Little, 2005). In the early reading stages, children's phonological awareness skills influence their reading development (Hogan et al., 2005). However, once children have developed some reading ability, their reading ability influences their development of phonological awareness (Hogan et al., 2005). For this reason, it is very important to make the most of the early development years in order to instill phonological awareness into children and produce strong readers. If reading difficulties arise, early intervention is essential in order to avoid long-term challenges (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

Phonological awareness training and intervention can occur even before reading difficulties are detected.

Children's phonological awareness skills at the beginning of kindergarten have been found to be one of the best predictors for their subsequent reading success (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze, Ryan, & Stoner, 2003; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004). Strong phonological awareness skills produce strong readers, making phonological awareness an important element of literacy. Phonological awareness has been known to improve children's abilities to identify and decode words (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Blending and segmenting are elements of phonological awareness that directly contribute to the decoding of texts (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). As a result, basic phonological awareness skills are essential for predicting reading success and producing good readers (Ehri et al., 2001; Hintze et al., 2003; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

## *Parental Role in the Development of Phonological Awareness*

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It is important to recognize that children do not grow and develop in isolation; instead they are part of much larger environments that influence them. As a rule, the most immediate environment that has the greatest influence on them is their family (Shaffer, Wood, & Willoughby, 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). As language and literacy skills are developed through human interactions, these family relationships and interactions become very important in developing basic literacy skills, including phonological awareness, through oral language (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Parental support is crucial in the early development of children's literacy, as the environments that children are raised in tend to have the largest influence on their development (Shaffer et al., 2005).

Parents are children's first and most influential teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). They can have a substantial impact on the success of their children's literacy through the development of phonological awareness. This is especially true for children that have been diagnosed with, or are at risk of having, reading difficulties as these children may need continued instruction in phonological awareness beyond what they receive within the classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

The best time for children to begin learning to read is before they enter kindergarten (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Though many parents understand the importance of home literacy, they may not possess knowledge about effective strategies and how to implement them (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson,

2004). Children who have parents that are actively involved in their learning often do better in school, as positive attitudes towards learning are usually developed when parents show interest, discussion is encouraged, and an engaged learning environment is fostered (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Many parents wish to make a difference in the lives of their children and develop their children's literacy but are not fully equipped with the proper knowledge and tools. The goal of this handbook is to add to parents' inventory by providing suggestions for home-based practices that can be used to promote children's phonological awareness.

## *General Principles to Improve the Effectiveness of Phonological Awareness Activities*

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It is important for parents to understand effective activities to complete with children that promote phonological awareness. It also is crucial to understand how to implement these activities in order to increase children's success. The next section is designed to provide best practice techniques in order to promote the development of phonological awareness skills. Most of the information in the following section is not unique to phonological awareness. Basic principles are outlined that can be applied when providing instruction in any number of areas. This section will present background information that can be applied to the activities that are supplied later in the handbook.

### *Providing Feedback*

When completing the activities that follow in this handbook, it is important that feedback is provided to children throughout the process in order to make the greatest gains (Cambourne, 1995; Phillips et al., 2008). The feedback provided should be meaningful and specific (Cambourne, 1995; Phillips et al., 2008). For example, simply telling children "good job" is not the most effective feedback, as it does not leave children with an impression of what behaviour was completed well. It is more beneficial to explain to children exactly what was done well and why that was correct. The feedback provided also should be positive (Phillips et al., 2008). This may involve providing children with new goals after indicating what they were able to do well. Keeping the feedback positive gives encouragement that is necessary for effective



learning to continue to take place, with this being especially true for young children (Phillips et al., 2008).

Feedback should be given to children frequently in order to ensure that they are comprehending the task and responding appropriately (Phillips et al., 2008). Frequent feedback allows children to gauge their response and make changes in their understanding if necessary. The feedback should also be immediate (Phillips et al., 2008). Immediate feedback ensures that children are clear which feedback message is attached to each action. Without immediate feedback, the message can become blurred, as children may not remember or be able to identify connections between the feedback and their actions. Specific, positive, frequent and immediate responses are the key components of effective feedback and result in increased skill levels in children (Phillips et al., 2008).

When difficulties arise, it is important that these challenges are addressed in the feedback (Phillips et al., 2008). However, prior to delivering feedback, the reason for these difficulties must be considered. Difficulties that are the result of lack of knowledge or lack of attentiveness should be addressed differently (Phillips et al., 2008). Feedback that addresses lack of knowledge must consider how children may have incorrectly interpreted the task and resolve this issue immediately (Phillips et al., 2008). Feedback addressing lack of attentiveness must target this issue directly and include strategies to improve attentiveness before the activity moves forward (e.g., a reward system, change of setting, or removing distractions; Phillips et al., 2008).

### *Scaffolding and Working at an Appropriate Difficulty Level*

The use of scaffolding becomes imperative when providing instruction to children in order to see the best results (Skibbe, Behnke, & Justice, 2004). When using scaffolding, the type and level of instruction is based on the progress and behaviour of the children in order for them to gradually increase their understanding (Shaffer et al., 2005). This gradual increase in understanding creates a natural progression towards improvement and independence. By gradually building upon their understanding, the new tasks provided to children should allow them to stretch their current knowledge and develop further (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Scaffolding creates success with assistance, with a gradual release of knowledge and responsibility until children are able to complete the tasks independently (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). This gradual release is important in order for growth and learning to occur (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Skibbe et al., 2004).

This handbook is designed to follow a natural scaffolding progression within each section and subsection, with the extension activities providing challenges and building new understanding upon previous learning. However, parents should still construct their own scaffolding within each activity. For example, using images or providing prompts may be necessary initially but can be removed as children become more confident. Responsive scaffolding is the most appropriate type of scaffolding as it requires children to use the greatest level of thinking, making connections between previous information and new understanding (Skibbe et al., 2004). This specific type of scaffolding encourages the use of higher level thinking questions rather than question–answer responses

(Skibbe et al., 2004). It encourages children to internalize what they have learned and then apply it rather than repeat or regurgitate the information. Responsive scaffolding can be applied by asking children open-ended questions while completing activities or developing challenges that are specific to children's responses as opportunities arise during the activities. For example, given the response from children that boat and coat rhyme, parents may ask children how they know that these two words rhyme. Using these techniques will promote greater learning and foster a deep understanding of phonological awareness.

An easy way to incorporate scaffolding when teaching phonological awareness using this handbook is by making use of the extension activities. For example, many of the activities in the blending and segmenting section begin with completing tasks of the respective element using syllables and work their way up to completing the activities using individual sounds (phonemes). Finally, hand signals and visual representations have been shown to act as effective tools for scaffolding (Phillips et al., 2008), with the understanding that they are gradually decreased and ultimately removed so that children can experience success independently.

In order for the children's learning and the application of scaffolding to be most effective, activities must be delivered at an appropriate level of difficulty or be within what is referred to as the zone of proximal development (Phillips et al., 2008; van Kleeck, 2004). The zone of proximal development is a term used to describe the difference between what children can successfully accomplish independently and what they can complete with assistance (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Shaffer et al.,

2005). To work within the children's zone of proximal development there must be a combination of understanding that children have mastered as well as new challenges that they cannot yet complete with confidence (van Kleeck, 2004). That is, while they will find the task challenging to complete, they are capable of completing it successfully. The purpose of working within the zone of proximal development is not to challenge children to the point of frustration but instead allow them to experience success in conjunction with challenges that move their learning forward (Shaffer et al., 2005).

The layout of the handbook is created for parents to easily locate activities that are within their children's zone of proximal development. The organization of the activities within each of the rhyming, blending and segmenting sections provides a natural level of difficulty progression. Also, within each of these sections the activities are organized in increasing levels of difficulty. Parents are encouraged to allow their children to progress through the various levels of activities at a pace that is comfortable for their children.

### *Modeling and Thinking Aloud*

Modeling is an effective strategy to teach children a skill, including the elements of phonological awareness (Cambourne, 1995; Shaffer et al., 2005; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). Modeling requires parents to complete the activity exactly how they would like their children to complete it (Cambourne, 1995; Shaffer et al., 2005; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). Along with a complete demonstration, an explanation of the process, or talking through the process, is necessary (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat,

2012). Modeling is an excellent strategy to employ instead of simply explaining a process or activity to children as it engages them in the specifics of the activity as well as the underlying thought or mental processes.

An important component of modeling is thinking aloud (Cambourne, 1995; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). Thinking aloud articulates thoughts during the process of completing an activity so that the thought process becomes apparent to children (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). The transfer of the thought process from parents to children is essential, as understanding the process of completing presented activities is critical for children's long-term learning. Using the strategy of thinking aloud encourages children to do the same. As children take on the task of thinking aloud, they are able to develop their learning and it will be easier for parents to provide appropriate assistance when they struggle (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003).

### *Visual Aids*

The use of visual aids can produce greater understanding and learning as it provides children with a visual memory in addition to an oral memory to recall at a later date (Phillips et al., 2008). Activity-based instruction that utilizes visual aids such as images and manipulatives has been shown to promote greater progress than activities that do not include these tools (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008). Using visual aids also has been demonstrated to promote the development of children's phonological awareness (Ferraz, Pocinho, Pereira, & Soares, 2012; Fielding-Barnsley & Hay, 2012; Rule, Dockstader, & Stewart, 2006).

Visual aids can have a variety of appearances including illustrations in a storybook. For instance, illustrations can act as a visual aid by providing some guidance and image association for children when learning the element of blending. If children are able to recognize the beginning sound of a word, the images can provide clues to direct children towards the correct word. Manipulatives are another type of visual aid. Manipulatives are instructional aids that provide children with a visual representation of a concept (e.g., bead sliders, blocks, counters). When promoting phonological awareness, manipulatives are effective in illustrating abstract concepts such as blending and segmenting to children. Throughout this handbook, there are a number of opportunities for visual aids to be introduced to promote children's development of phonological awareness.

Visual aids are an excellent resource in order to provide children with support when beginning an activity (Skibbe et al., 2004). When developing phonological awareness skills, visual aids allow children to accomplish more independently than they would be able to without them (Rule et al., 2006). However, it is important that children do not rely on them indefinitely (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Skibbe et al., 2004). Visual aids should be treated as a scaffolding tool in order to provide support when necessary but then gradually removed so that children develop a firm grasp of phonological awareness concepts and do not become reliant upon visual aids (Ferraz et al., 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Skibbe et al., 2004).

### *Kinesthetic-Based Activities*

Children do not live their lives sitting still. They are constantly moving. Therefore it makes sense for children to learn the same way they live. In order for children's learning to be most successful, it is beneficial for movement to be incorporated into learning (Phillips et al., 2008). The use of movement creates an additional memory, rather than oral or visual, that children can recall at a later date (Phillips et al., 2008). The authentic and movement-based activities in this handbook encourage children to apply what they learn to a variety of settings as they can occur inside and outside the home. Different activities are suitable for different places, and the use of movement promotes transferable learning in children.

Activities that are kinesthetically based and encourage children to participate in movement produce greater improvements than activities that do not have these components (Rule et al., 2006). Stressing movement to children within activities where movement is not normally present (clapping syllables when reading) as well as using activities that have a kinesthetic basis and making the focus phonological awareness (hopscotch) both produce greater learning than standard lessons that involve children sitting at a table and completing worksheet-based activities (Rule et al., 2006). Adding movement to learning produces greater results as children are able to absorb more of the information (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Rule et al., 2006).

Kinesthetic-based activities can take a variety of forms including clapping or creating actions when reading or singing, playing games (hopscotch, bean bag toss), or adding movements to non-movement-centred activities (doing one jumping-jack as

children say each phoneme in a word). Many of the activities within this handbook have movements incorporated into otherwise sedentary activities, and several kinesthetic-based activities can be found in the latter portion of activities. It is important not to be limited by the instructions for the activities; parents should feel free to incorporate movement as the opportunity arises to improve the development of phonological awareness in children as well as increase children's engagement in the activities.



## *Words to Remember*

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**alliteration** includes words that share the same beginning sound (dog, dove, deep)

**blending** is the skill used to bring sounds together to form a word (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003)

**decoding** uses letter–sound relationships to read words

**early literacy** is the time period when children learn about the form, content and use of literacy. At this stage children are not yet able to integrate this knowledge into their reading or writing skills

**feedback** is information provided as a reaction to the performance of a task, and this information is used to improve that skill

**kinaesthetic-based activities** are activities that encourage movement in order to foster greater learning than instruction without movement

**literacy** includes the skills of reading and writing as well as basic language skills such as speaking and listening (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998)

**manipulatives** are instructional aids that provide children with a visual and tangible representation of a concept

**modeling** is a demonstration of the necessary cognitive/ mental processes to complete a task as well as an explanation of the processes

**phoneme** is the smallest unit of speech. Changing one phoneme can distinguish one word from another (Mody, 2004; Murray, 2006; Phillips et al., 2008; /d/)

**phonological awareness** is the appreciation and manipulation of sounds of speech. It is separate from meaning and print (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008; Snow et al., 1998; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004)

**pseudo-word** or a pretend word that may appear to be a word but carries no meaning

**rhyming** is manipulating or changing, one sound in a word to produce a different word (fun, sun, run)

**scaffolding** bases instruction on the progress and behaviour of children, gradually increasing their independent ability by releasing responsibility

towards them (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003)

**segmenting** is the skill of separating words into smaller units of speech or isolating an individual sound in a syllable or a word (Gunning, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Troia, 2004)

**thinking aloud** is articulating the thoughts during a process to make the process more apparent

**visual aids** produce greater understanding as they create a visual memory to recall (Phillips et al., 2008)

**zone of proximal development** the difference between what children can accomplish independently and what they can complete with assistance (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Shaffer et al., 2005)

· denotes the break between syllables in a word

// denotes a phoneme

# Reading with Your Child

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*"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love  
of books is the best of all."  
— Jacqueline Kennedy*

# Becoming Familiar with Nursery Rhymes

adapted from Phonemical (2013c)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**Nursery rhymes** are a great way to engage children in developing an understanding of rhyme. Nursery rhymes are accessible to children of all ages as they are brief and relatively easy to remember. Children who begin school knowing about nursery rhymes tend to be more successful readers than those who do not (Maclean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987).

As children become familiar with nursery rhymes they also become familiar with the rhyming words contained within them. When children begin to recognize the rhythmic pattern of rhyme they become aware of the concept of rhyme. Reading nursery rhymes to children is an excellent first step in assisting them to begin to develop an understanding of rhyme, an important element of phonological awareness.

## *The Activity*

**Select a nursery rhyme** that your child will enjoy. Try to choose one that has words that are familiar to him/her so that the focus of the activity is on rhyme and not on expanding your child's vocabulary.

**When reading nursery rhymes** to your child, emphasize the words that rhyme. This emphasis can be provided by pausing after each word, saying the rhyming words

louder, completing a gesture such as clapping when reading the rhyming words, or reading rhyming pairs before reading the nursery rhyme. Providing such an emphasis will assist your child in developing an awareness of rhyme.

At some point your child may ask for an explanation of rhyme. A simple definition of rhyme is two or more words where the ending parts sound the same. In many cases providing examples can facilitate this understanding. Some examples include, bat and hat, base and case, and see and me. Other examples can be provided using the nursery rhymes being read.

**Resources:** The following websites are some of many that provide lists of nursery rhymes available in hypertext format. This text can be read together on-screen or the nursery rhymes can be printed to be read in paper copy.

<http://www.nurseryrhymes.com/>  
<http://www.zelo.com/family/nursery/>

The website listed below provides nursery rhymes in hypertext format, with audio (voice over and sound effects), visual and video supplements.

<http://www.mothersgooseclub.com/>

Many nursery rhyme books are also available, ranging from those that contain

one nursery rhyme to those that are a compilation of nursery rhymes. A list of these types of books can be found at the following websites:

The reading level, and suggested age levels of these texts are listed, as well as a short synopsis of each book, with a link for purchasing the book.

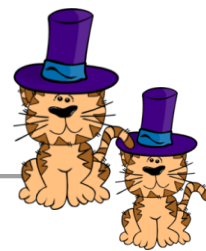
<http://www.readingrockets.org/articles/books/c643/>

Finally, the website below provides an extensive list of book titles, as well as the authors and ratings of popular nursery rhyme books.

<http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/nursery-rhymes>

**Extension:** When your child is familiar with a nursery rhyme, pause where the second rhyming word in a pair would be. Ask your child to fill in the missing word. Do not worry that your child may use his/her memory to complete this exercise successfully as the process of completing this activity will still reinforce the understanding of rhyme.

## Stories With Rhyme - Do You Hear a Rhyme?



**Stories that follow a rhyming pattern** are an excellent resource to promote children's understanding of rhyme and to develop their ability to recognize rhyme.

Reading stories with rhyming elements to children can promote their language and reading development. By adding rhyme-identification activities to your reading routine, children are able to gain more from the experience. The activity *Do You Hear a Rhyme?* promotes children's ability to recognize rhyme.

### *The Activity*

**To begin** this activity, it is important that your child be able to recognize a rhyme scheme selected in the book. In some cases this can be accomplished by reading a few pages and asking your child if he/she hears rhyme. In other cases more instruction may be needed such as reading pairs of rhyming words in isolation followed by a direct explanation of rhyme (two words that have the same ending parts). Once the rhyme scheme in the story has been established, you may begin this activity.

**Replace** the second word in the rhyme-pair with another word that does not rhyme (it may help for you to pre-read the book in order to generate replacement words for this task). For example, when reading the book *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (Dr. Seuss,

1990) replace the passage, "Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!" (p. 1) with "Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and [going]!" Place emphasis on the rhyming and substituted words. (Note: It is usually the last word of the sentence that is substituted).

**Following** the substitution ask your child whether the sentences contain words that rhyme. If your child is able to identify that the substituted word does not rhyme, provide praise to reinforce his/her understanding of rhyme.

If your child says that there are rhyming words, explain the concept of rhyme and provide examples of rhyming words. Say the two rhyming words in the sentences as well as the pair of words that were substituted in isolation so your child is better able to identify that the words do not rhyme.

**Continue** the activity in the same fashion, substituting words that do not rhyme as well as using the correct words or words that do rhyme.

**Dr. Seuss** is a well-known author who is famous for writing children's books that are full of rhyme and that children enjoy. Some of his books include:

- Oh, the Places You'll Go! (1990)
- The Cat in the Hat (1957)
- The Lorax (1971)
- Green Eggs and Ham (1960)

- Fox in Socks (1965)
- Horton Hears a Who! (1954)
- There's a Wocket in My Pocket!  
(1974)
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas!  
(1957)
- \*all books on this list are published  
by Random House

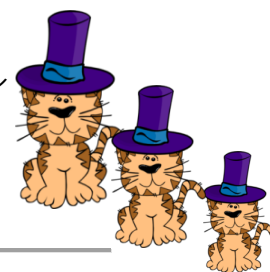
This is by no means an exhaustive list as there are many more titles to be read together!

**Extensions:** When your child is successfully able to identify whether rhyme is present, *remove the emphasis* placed on the target word and the substituted word and complete the activity again.

# Stories With Rhyme - Fill in the Blanks

adapted from Phonemical (2013c)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**Stories that follow a rhyming pattern** are an excellent resource to promote children's ability to generate rhyme.

Reading stories provides benefits to children. However, by adding activities to your reading routine children are able to gain more from the experience. The activity *Fill in the Blanks* promotes children's ability to generate rhyme.

## *The Activity*

**To begin** this activity choose a book that follows a clear rhyming pattern. After reading the first few pages of the story create pauses for your child to fill in. The word that is left as a blank should be the second word in a pair of rhyming words. This will likely be the last word in the sentence.

**After** the pause, ask your child to fill in the missing word by generating a rhyming word. If your child needs more support, identify the initial word in the rhyme pair that he/she is trying to rhyme with (the target word). If your child continues to struggle generating a rhyming word, develop a list of a few words together so that the expectations are modeled.

The rhyming word that your child generates does not have to make sense in the story and does not have to be a real word; a pseudo (pretend) word is acceptable. Children enjoy using pseudo words to create silly sentences that rhyme!

**Dr. Seuss books** are an excellent resource for stories that rhyme and are especially useful for this activity. Dr. Seuss is known for the use of pseudo words and creating silly stories with words that have fictional meanings. His style lends itself towards this activity as children have the opportunity to engage in the same creativity as Dr. Seuss.

A short list of Dr. Seuss books is provided in the previous activity, however a longer list of Dr. Seuss books can be found online at: <http://www.seussdude.com/list-books.html>.

An extensive list of other popular rhyming books can be found on the following website: <http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/rhyming-picture-books>

The above website lists a number of picture books known for their rhyming patterns as well as the author and a rating accompanying the books.



**Extension:** When your child has been successful at creating their own words that rhyme, or completing sentences that do not

make sense he/she can move on to fill in the blanks with words that make sense within the context of the story.



## Modeling Blending

**Modeling** is an important component in helping children acquire a new skill. When modeling a skill it is important to demonstrate exactly how you would like children to complete it (Shaffer et al., 2005; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). It is also important to explain the process that you are following, known as thinking aloud (Shaffer et al., 2005; The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2012). As part of thinking aloud, it is important to describe how each step of the process is completed. The use of modeling can be applied to the completion of blending activities, another important element of phonological awareness.

### *The Activity*

**When reading** a book (a storybook or an alphabet book will work well), blending can be modeled. Choosing a book that your child is familiar with will encourage him/her to focus on blending rather than the outcome of the story.

**Begin** by using shorter words (two syllables), slowly working your way up to longer words (more than two syllables). An example of modeling blending is shown below using the word *louder*.

-read the word emphasizing the two parts of the word (e.g., *loud · er*) pausing between the two parts

-make sure you speak clearly in order for your child to hear the individual syllables within the target word

-say the two parts again, *loud · er* with a shorter pause between the syllables, repeating this process a few more times (three or four) until the pause is almost non-existent

-explain to your child that you are removing the pause and trying to figure out the whole word by blending the sounds together (thinking aloud)

-say the word as a whole, *louder*

**After** modeling the skill of blending a couple times (two or three), have your child repeat after you as you blend another word.

Although your child may not fully understand the process of blending initially, he/she can mimic you in order to develop his/her understanding of blending sounds.

**Extension:** After your child is able to imitate the blending of syllables, the same process can be repeated with individual sounds (phonemes). When modeling blending with phonemes, the same process can be followed with a pause between each individual sound. Blending individual sounds is more challenging as your child must rely less on his/her word knowledge and instead focus on individual sounds, which is a much more abstract concept than syllables.

# Guess the Word - Using Syllables

adapted from Phonemical (2013a)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>



**Blending** can be easily promoted when reading books, including storybooks or alphabet books, to children. Focusing on the skill of blending should begin with blending syllables, as this is simpler than blending individual sounds.

## *The Activity*

**To begin** this activity allow your child to choose a book that he/she enjoys reading together. Any type of book is appropriate.

**When reading** the book to your child, choose words that are familiar to him/her and read them aloud by separating them into syllables. Within every three to four sentences you read, choose a word to segment. Begin with words that are two syllables.

In order to effectively separate words into syllables, a clear pause should be present in between the syllables.

**After** reading the word separated into syllables, ask your child to identify the word. He/she will have to use the skill of blending in order to blend the syllables together to produce a word. If the book has

pictures these visual images may provide clues to aid your child in identifying the target word.

A sample script of this activity can be found below,

*The sentence reads:*

*The big dog was playing with the small kitten.*

*You would read:*

*The big dog was playing with the small kit · ten.*

*Then ask:*

*Who was the big dog playing with?*

*Children will have to blend, kit · ten, in order to identify that the big dog was playing with a small kitten.*

**Extension:** As your child develops his/her blending skills, the number of syllables in the word can be increased to raise the level of difficulty. Alternatively, the number of sounds within the syllables can be increased in order to challenge your child.

## Guess the Word - Using Phonemes

adapted from Phonemical (2013a)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>



**Phonemes** are the smallest unit of sound. The word 'cat' can be divided into three phonemes /c/ /a/ /t/. The word cannot be divided up into fewer sounds.

**Blending** can be easily promoted when reading books, including storybooks or alphabet books, to children. After focusing on the skill of blending syllables (see previous activity) the next step is to blend individual sounds, also known as phonemes.

### *The Activity*

**To begin** this activity, have your child, choose a book that he/she enjoys reading together. Any type of book is appropriate for blending to be completed.

**When reading** the book to your child choose words that are familiar to him/her and read the words separated into individual sounds (phonemes). Separating one word in every three or four sentences is appropriate. Begin with shorter words that are two or three phonemes long.

In order to effectively separate words into individual sounds (phonemes) a clear pause should be present in between each sound.

**After** reading the word separated into individual sounds (phonemes), ask your

child to identify the word. They will have to use the skill of blending in order to blend the phonemes together to produce a word instead of individual sounds. If the book has pictures, these visual images can be used to aid children in discovering the word that was separated.

A sample script of this activity can be found below,

*The sentence reads:*

*The big dog was playing with the small kitten.*

*You would read:*

*The big /d/ /o/ /g/ was playing with the small kitten.*

*Then ask:*

*Who was the small kitten playing with?*

*Children will have to blend, /d/ /o/ /g/, in order to identify that the small kitten was playing with the big dog.*

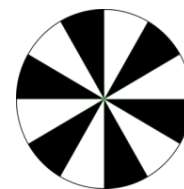
**Extension:** As your child becomes confident and is able to successfully blend sounds, you can increase the difficulty from shorter words to longer words with more sounds (phonemes).

# Counting Parts of Language

adapted from Ferraz et al. (2012)

and Phonemeneal (2013d)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!segmenting/cktc>



**Counting different parts of language** is a valuable skill for children to master when developing an understanding of segmenting, another element of phonological awareness. Within this activity the difficulty level can readily increase incrementally depending on the children's ability.

## *The Activity*

**Begin** by allowing your child to choose a book that he/she would like you to read to him/her. This activity, *Counting Parts of Language*, can be completed using any type of book. Giving your child the opportunity to choose the book encourages control over his/her own learning, helps to ensure that focus is maintained and some level of interest in the content of the story is present.

**Each time you turn the page** ask your child to count the number of words on the page. Depending on the age and ability of your child you may choose to count aloud with him/her.

**Continue** by reading the words on the page. Repeat the process of counting and reading the words on the page each time the page is turned.

**Note:** Clapping, or another action of your choice, is a very effective strategy to use when counting words in order for your child to hear, see, and experience the clear division between each word.

**Manipulatives** such as blocks or beads may also be helpful in order for your child to identify the different words. To use manipulatives have your child place a block or bead on top of each word on the page. Then, ask your child to count the items placed on the page. This provides greater visual and kinesthetic stimulation, fostering a deeper level of understanding.

If your child has difficulty completing this activity, the use of clapping and/or manipulatives becomes increasingly important. However, if he/she continues to find this activity difficult, provide more support. More support may include modeling the task, or thinking aloud together counting each word, slowly and clearly identifying when one word stops and another begins, as well as how you know this.

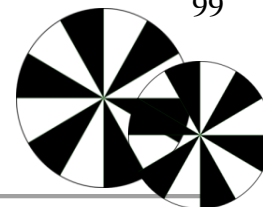
Identifying and counting words allows children to develop an understanding that a message or story can be broken up into different parts which can become incrementally smaller.

**Extension:** Smaller units of language (syllables) can be counted as your child improves. In order for this to be effective the task must be adapted slightly. Instead of counting all the syllables each time a page is turned, it is more manageable to focus on just one or two words per page and count the syllables in those words. Then continue by reading the story to your child. Clapping and manipulatives can be used in the same ways as previously mentioned in this activity.

After children have mastered counting syllables, they can move on to count individual sounds (phonemes). This can be done using the same process described for the syllables.

As there is a clear three-step progression from words, to syllables, to phonemes, it is important to note that this activity will occur over a long period of time. Each level should be mastered before moving on to the next so that your child is working at a level that is comfortable for him/her (within his/her zone of proximal development).

## Reading Alphabet Books



**Reading alphabet books** provides children with a different experience that cannot always be acquired while reading storybooks. Storybooks elicit conversation about content; however alphabet books promote greater development of phonological awareness (Stadler & McEvoy, 2003).

**Alphabet books** provide a context for children to develop an understanding of the connections between letters and sounds. The understanding of segmenting one sound from the rest of the word is also encouraged (alphabet books usually naturally segment the beginning sound). Alphabet books also tend to use words that are simple and familiar to children, and this places the emphasis on phonological awareness skills rather than focusing on vocabulary and making meaning.

### *The Activity*

**Begin reading the alphabet book** to your child. You will notice that the beginning sounds of words are naturally segmented in this type of book. As each new letter appears, so does an object associated with it. It is natural to segment the beginning sound in order to make this connection clear to your child.

For example, if the letter of focus is A, a picture of an apple may be the object that accompanies it. This naturally promotes

segmenting /a/ from apple to emphasis the letter A.

**Place emphasis** on the letter by repeating the name of the letter as well as the corresponding sound in isolation from the associated word.

Continuing with the previous example, read the word *apple* and segment the first sound in the word, /a/, while pointing to the letter A.

**Then**, read the entire associated word (*apple*) while placing emphasis on the beginning sound (/a/). Ask your child to segment the beginning sound of the word and say it in isolation from the rest of the word (as you have previously demonstrated).

Complete these steps for each letter of the alphabet as you continue to read the rest of the book.

**Resources** for alphabet books can be found online at:

<http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/how/alphabet-books>

This website provides an extensive list of popular alphabet books, their author, a rating, and a link leading to a brief summary of the book.

Other popular titles of alphabet books include,

Dr. Seuss's ABC by Dr. Seuss

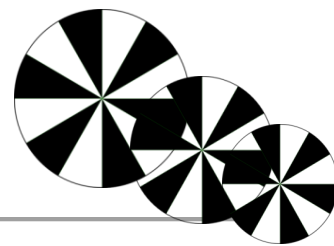
-1996, Random House  
Books  
Farm Alphabet Book by Jane Miller  
-1987, Scholastic  
Paperbacks  
Miss Spider's ABC by David Kirk  
-1998, Scholastic Press

**Extension:** Though beginning sounds are naturally segmented within an alphabet book, other sounds can be segmented. When your child masters segmenting the beginning sound you can move on to the ending sound or a sound in the middle of the word. The same instructions can be followed, always encouraging the skill of segmentation.



## Something's Missing

adapted from Ferraz et al. (2012)



**Segmenting** can be completed through the process of segmenting each individual part of a word, however segmenting can also be demonstrated by isolating just one specific part of a word individually. The following activity, *Something's Missing*, encourages the latter.

### *The Activity*

**Choose** a book to read with your child. The book should be comprised of relatively simple and short words that your child is familiar with. In the beginning, the familiarity is necessary in order for your child to have success in completing the rest of the activity.

**As you read the book** to your child, choose a simple word to complete the following steps of the activity. It may be helpful to choose a word that also has a correlating visual image found in the illustrations of the book in order to provide added support for your child.

**Read the sentence** with the word you have selected. Then re-read the sentence; however this time read only a portion of the target word to your child. For example, if the word you have selected is water, read only the first syllable (wat · ), then leave a pause for your child to complete the rest of the word ( · er).

This activity can be completed every two to three sentences when reading the story.

A sample script of this activity can be found below.

If the sentence reads: *It was sunny so the puppy needed a drink of water.*

Read: *It was sunny so the puppy needed a drink of water.*

Then read: *It was sunny so the puppy needed a drink of wat · (pause).*

If necessary prompt your child: *Can you finish the rest of the word?*

Correct child response: · er

If the correct response is provided, give your child praise and positive feedback. If the correct response is not elicited repeat the target word and clap out the syllables together so that they can hear the word segmented correctly.

**Extension:** Once your child is confident with this activity using syllables you can complete the activity in the same manner using individual sounds (phonemes). Instead of segmenting the word into syllables the word will be segmented into phonemes, with just one phoneme missing for your child to fill in.

# *Singing Songs Together*

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*"The only thing better than singing is more singing."  
— Ella Fitzgerald*

# Willaby Wallaby

*adapted from Virginia Department of Education (1998)  
and Phonemical (2013c)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!rhyming/cx3>



**Willaby Wallaby** is a song that is fun for children to sing and easy for them to learn. This song makes use of pseudo (pretend) words when developing a rhyming pattern. Therefore, this places the song at a low level of difficulty as children are not required to make meaning from the song. It is strictly used as a tool to facilitate rhyme.

## *The Activity*

**Begin singing** the song *Willaby Wallaby*; sample lyrics can be found below:

Willaby wallaby woo,  
an elephant sat on you.

Willaby wallaby Wark,  
an elephant sat on Mark.

Willaby wallaby Wusan,  
an elephant sat on Susan.

\*Fill in the name portion of the song with names of people that your child knows; family members and close friends are usually a good place to start.

**As you sing the song** ask your child to join in with you. At first have your child suggest people that he/she would like to sing about

while you complete the song with the names filled in along with the appropriate rhyme.

**After** the use of rhyming within the song has been modeled, you and your child can sing the song together. Sing the first half of the verses using the appropriate pseudo (pretend) word to rhyme with the name of someone familiar to your child. Have your child sing the second half of the verse, substituting the appropriate name that rhymes.

If the name that your child provides does not rhyme, this is a good time to slow down the song and explain the use of rhyme and emphasize that rhyming words have the same ending sounds.

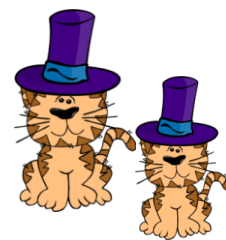
This should be a fun activity, as the song is whimsical with the use of pseudo words making the message of the song nonsensical and silly.

**Extension:** Once your child is familiar with both parts of the verse (the name and the rhyming word) they can begin to sing an entire verse complete with the name of someone they know as well as the appropriate rhyme.

## Sing with Me

adapted from Phonemical (2013c)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**The ability to generate rhyming words** is a valuable skill and an important aspect of rhyme. As many children's songs follow a rhyming pattern, singing songs with children is an excellent way to practice generating rhyme in an entertaining way.

Many children's songs can be used in the activity *Sing with Me*. The lyrics of two songs are provided in this handbook following this activity (A Hunting We Will Go and Down By The Bay).

### *The Activity*

**Using one of the songs** that follow this activity (A Hunting We Will Go or Down By The Bay), begin to sing the song to your child.

**In the beginning** when your child is learning the song, it is likely that they will not sing along with all of the words; the words in bold located on the lyrics page change from verse to verse. It will take more time to become familiar with the changing lyrics than those that remain consistent.

**After** your child has become more familiar with the song, provide the first rhyming word in the rhyming pair and leave a pause in place of the second rhyming word of the pair for your child to continue the song (these pairs are in bold on the lyrics page).

If your child fills in the blanks with a rhyme, give positive feedback and praise to your child. If your child is incorrect, repeat the target rhyming word for him/her to find a word that rhymes. If this still does not trigger the response of a rhyming word, provide the correct answer and repeat the target word and the rhyming word, placing emphasis on the ending sounds being the same.

**As you sing the song** and run out of lyrics from those following this activity, take this opportunity to work with your child to generate more pairs of rhyming words to lengthen the song. These pairs can be developed prior to singing the song or as the song is being sung depending on your preference.

When extending the song, a good strategy to use is to provide the initial rhyming word, or target word, for your child to generate a rhyming word that follows. This gives you control of choosing an appropriate word, that has a rhyming word that makes sense to complete the rest of the song; however it still gives your child the freedom to make meaning from the song and experiment with the generation of rhyme.

**Extension:** As your child is able to complete the pairs of rhymes that you generate, encourage your child to independently

develop his/her own verse to add to the song.

## *A Hunting We Will Go Lyrics*

---

A-Hunting We Will Go  
A-Hunting We Will Go  
A-Hunting We Will Go

We'll catch a **bear**  
And put him **in a chair**  
A-hunting we will go.

We'll catch a **goat**  
And put him **in a boat**  
A-hunting we will go.

We'll catch a **fox**  
And put him **in a box**  
A-hunting we will go.

We'll catch a **frog**  
And put him **in a log**  
A-hunting we will go.

\*Using the imagination of you and your child the song can be expanded following the same pattern.

We'll catch a **whale**  
And put him **up for sale**  
A-hunting we will go.

We'll catch a **cat**  
And put him **on a mat**  
A-hunting we will go.

## *Down By The Bay Lyrics*

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Down by the bay  
Where the watermelons grow  
Back to my home  
I dare not go  
For if I do  
My mother will say  
"Did you ever see a **moose**  
**Kissing a goose?**"  
Down by the bay

Down by the bay  
Where the watermelons grow  
Back to my home  
I dare not go  
For if I do  
My mother will say

"Did you ever see a **whale**  
**With a polka dot tail?**"  
Down by the bay  
  
Down by the bay  
Where the watermelons grow  
Back to my home  
I dare not go  
For if I do  
My mother will say

"Did you ever see a **fly**  
**Wearing a tie?**"  
Down by the bay  
  
Down by the bay  
Where the watermelons grow

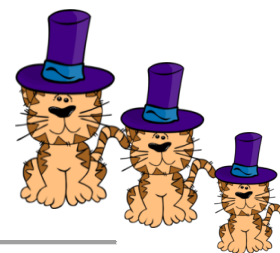
Back to my home  
I dare not go  
For if I do  
My mother will say  
"Did you ever see a **bear**  
**Combing his hair?**"  
Down by the bay

\*Using the imagination of you and your child the song can be expanded following the same pattern.

# Sing Along - Words that Rhyme

adapted from Phonemical (2013c)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**Generating** lists of words that rhyme can be a beneficial task for children to complete in order to develop their rhyming skills, which ultimately develops their phonological awareness. This is not always an appealing task for children to complete; however the use of song can make rhyme generation a more enjoyable activity for children.

## *The Activity*

**A short song** can be used to encourage your child to generate rhyme. The lyrics to the song are located below:

I know two words that rhyme,  
I can say them all the time,  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
I know two words that rhyme.

**Begin** by singing this short song and substituting your own set of rhyming words into the blanks. Then ask your child to sing the verse that you created together. Repeat this with another set of rhyming words. Complete these steps a few more times (three or four).

**Then**, ask your child to create his/her own verse with his/her own set of rhyming words. Brainstorming a set of rhyming words prior to singing the verse may be helpful for him/her.

If your child is successful in developing a verse that rhymes, give him/her praise to reinforce this skill.

If your child is unsuccessful, provide more support and think aloud, explaining the process of choosing the rhyming words that you chose to sing. Place emphasis on the ending of the words and explain that the endings of the words must sound the same.

The simplicity of the song allows for the focus of the activity to be on generating words that rhyme rather than creating a song that is connected and tells a story. This allows your child to incorporate more challenging words into the song that is generated; this may not be possible in other songs that require a story line to be applied to make meaning.

**Extension:** When your child is consistently successful with the short song in this activity, he/she can move on to a similar type of song that requires three rhyming words instead of a pair of words that rhyme. The lyrics are located below:

We can rhyme. We can rhyme.  
Listen to the words. Listen to the words.  
\_\_\_\_\_ rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
We can rhyme. We can rhyme.

## Transition Song

adapted from Phonemical (2013a)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>



**Transition** times refer to the time between the ending of one activity to the beginning of another activity. For some children transitions can be challenging, especially when it is from an activity they enjoy to one that is less desirable. The use of a song can make transition times smoother, as it can be used as a warning to prepare children for the change that is coming.

**The Transition Song** not only helps develop a routine and provides a warning for transition from one activity to another, it also encourages children to practice the skill of blending in order to determine what their next activity is. This provides practice of blending within a practical and authentic setting.

### *The Activity*

**Begin singing** the *Transition Song* a few minutes prior to the time you would like the transition to occur. This gives your child a warning and the opportunity to prepare for the transition that is coming. For example, if the transition is from playtime to dinner time, sing the *Transition Song* a few minutes before you would like your child to be ready for dinner.

**Sing** the *Transition Song* to the tune of "The Muffin Man;" the lyrics are as follows:

Do you know what time it is,  
What time it is, what time it is,  
Do you know what time it is  
When we eat din · ner?  
*When we eat dinner.*

Yes we eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ o'clock  
At \_\_\_\_ o'clock, at \_\_\_\_ o'clock.  
Yes we eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ o'clock.  
Yes we do!

**The underlined blanks** are for you to fill in, the first one has been demonstrated to provide an example of how the transition activity should be segmented into syllables. The italicized portion of the lyrics is completed by your child. He/she must accurately blend the activity that you have segmented to discover what to prepare for. You will continue to sing the second verse, and your child can join in with you.

This song is not limited to the transition to dinner, this line can be changed in order to accommodate any activity that you require your child to transition to, provided it has more than one syllable.

**Extension:** In the example provided, the activity that was segmented was segmented into syllables. However, once your child is confident in blending syllables you can segment the activities into phonemes for your child to blend together to increase the level of difficulty.



# *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*

*adapted from Phonemical (2013d)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!segmenting/cktc>



**Familiar objects** that children see on a regular basis provide an excellent set of vocabulary words to use for children to develop phonological awareness skills such as blending. Objects within the home and outside the home can be used as long as children encounter these articles on a regular basis.

As objects outside the home can be used in this activity, *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee* can be sung when children are away from home. This may include singing this song in the car or on walks.

## *The Activity*

**Sing** the song *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*, the lyrics are as follows,

Hickity tickity bumble bee,  
can you say /ch/ /ai/ /r/?

Hickity tickity bumble bee,  
yes I can say /ch/ /ai/ /r/,  
chair.

**The first couple times** you sing this song it will be necessary for you to sing both verses in order for your child to become familiar with how the song is structured. However, once your child has an understanding of the

song, both you and your child can participate in singing.

The first verse is for you, as the parent, to sing to your child. The second verse is for your child to sing back to you.

**As you sing the song**, when you encounter the first underlined portion of the song choose a familiar object that is visible to your child and segment the word; the word can be segmented into syllables or individual sounds (phonemes); the example shows the word segmented into phonemes.

Your child will continue with the second verse of the song alone, repeating what you have said followed by blending the phonemes together to produce the name of the object.

**Singing** about objects that are familiar and can be seen in the area that you and your child are in provides support as he/she can look around in order to aid in identification of the word that is being sung about.

**Correct identification** of the word in the song merits praise, and you and your child may continue the song with another object.

**However**, if your child does not identify the object correctly, it is important to provide correction and extra instruction. In this case, it is helpful to say the word

segmented again in isolation from the song; it may be necessary to model and think aloud in order for your child to grasp blending the sounds correctly.

**Extension:** When singing the song, substitute words that are familiar to your child but are not located in the immediate area. This will encourage relying solely on blending skills instead of having the assistance of a visual aid as a prompt to complete the blending necessary to finish the second verse of the song.

# Sound Sing Along

adapted from Phonemical (2013d)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!segmenting/cktc>



**Blending** sounds together to generate words is an important component of phonological awareness. This skill can be acquired through the use of song. The most challenging blending song in this handbook requires children to blend sounds together without the assistance of context (as demonstrated in the *Transition Song*), or visual cues (as seen in the song *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*).

**Sound Sing Along** requires children to blend the sounds together using the skills they have developed through other blending activities without any of the aids that they previously used before. When completing this activity, *Sound Sing Along*, it is advised that you begin with two syllable words, increasing the number of syllables in order to increase the level of difficulty.

## The Activity

**Begin** this activity by singing the *Sound Sing Along* to your child. It will be necessary to sing the entire song to your child a couple of times in order for him/her to develop an understanding of the way the song is constructed and what is expected of him/her.

**Then**, both you and your child can sing the song in its entirety together.

**After** you and your child are familiar with the song, you can sing the song divided into your respective parts.

The lyrics to the song *Sound Sing Along* are as follows:

What word do you hear when I say ap · ple?

ap · ple

ap · ple

What word do you hear when I say ap · ple?

Tell me what you hear.

The word you are singing is apple!

apple

apple

The word you are singing is apple!

Apple is what we're singing!

**The first verse** is for you, as a parent, to sing to your child. The underlined portion can be replaced with any word that your child is familiar with, segmenting it into syllables.

**The second verse** is for your child to sing, blending the segmented syllables to generate a word.

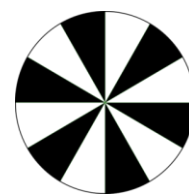
**The third verse** and final line is to sing together to conclude the song.

If your child is able to blend the syllables together correctly, give positive feedback

and increase the difficulty level by increasing the number of syllables that he/she must blend together.

**However,** if your child has difficulty blending the syllables together, repeat the segmented word in isolation. Think aloud in order to correctly blend the syllables together by gradually removing the pause between the syllables.

**Extension:** Once your child has mastered the task of blending syllables into words, you can segment the words you substitute into the song into individual sounds (phonemes). This creates a greater challenge for your child as it is more abstract. Begin with shorter words and increase the length of the words to increase the difficulty.



## Transition Song

adapted from Phonem.e.nal (2013a)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>

**Transition** times refer to the time between the ending of one activity to the beginning of another activity. For some children transitions can be challenging, especially when it is from an activity they enjoy to one that is less desirable. The use of a song can make transition times smoother as it can be used as a warning to prepare children for the change that is coming.

**The Transition Song** not only helps develop a routine and provides a warning for transition from one activity to another, it also encourages children to practice the skill of segmenting. This provides practice of segmenting within a practical and authentic setting.

### *The Activity*

**Begin singing** the *Transition Song* a few minutes prior to when you would like the transition to occur. This gives your child a warning and the opportunity to prepare for the transition that is coming. For example, if the transition is from playtime to dinner time, sing the *Transition Song* a few minutes before you would like your child to be ready for dinner.

**Sing** the *Transition Song* to the tune of "The Muffin Man;" the lyrics are as follows,

Do you know what time it is,

What time it is, what time it is,  
Do you know what time it is  
When we eat dinner?  
*eat din · ner*

Yes we eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ o'clock  
At \_\_\_\_ o'clock, at \_\_\_\_ o'clock.  
Yes we eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ o'clock.  
Yes we do!

**The underlined blanks** are for you to fill in; the first one has been demonstrated to provide an example of how the transition activity is substituted in.

**The italicized portion of the lyrics** is sung by your child. He/she must accurately segment the activity that you sang (the example is segmented into syllables). The first couple of times you sing this song it will be necessary to instruct your child when to sing and what to do. Encouraging your child to clap out the syllables of the activity may provide some necessary extra support. You will continue to sing the second verse, and your child can join in with you.

This song is not limited to the transition to dinner; this line can be changed in order to accommodate any activity that you require your child to transition to.

**Extension:** In the example provided the activity was segmented into syllables.

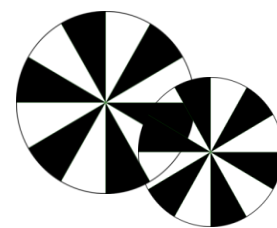
However, once your child is confident in segmenting syllables you can ask him/her to segment the activities into individual

sounds (phonemes) to increase the level of difficulty.

# *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*

*adapted from Phonemical (2013d)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!segmenting/cktc>



**Familiar objects** that children see on a regular basis provide an excellent set of vocabulary words to use for children to develop phonological awareness skills, including segmenting. Objects within the home and outside the home can be used as long as children encounter these articles on a regular basis.

As objects outside the home can be used in this activity, *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee* can be used when children are away from home. This may include singing the song in the car, going for a walk, or at the grocery store.

## *The Activity*

**Sing** the song *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*; the lyrics are as follows,

Hickity tickity bumble bee,  
can you clap basket for me?

Hickity tickity bumble bee,  
yes I can clap basket  
bas · ket.

**The first couple times** you sing this song it will be necessary for you to sing both verses in order for your child to become familiar with how the song is structured. However, once your child has an understanding of the

song, both you and your child can participate.

**The first verse** is for you, as the parent, to sing to your child.

**The second verse** is for your child to sing back to you.

**As you sing the song**, when you encounter the first underlined portion, choose a familiar object that is visible to your child. Begin with shorter words that have two or three syllables.

Your child will continue to the second verse of the song alone, repeating what you have said followed by segmenting the word into syllables, clapping to place emphasis on each syllable.

**Correct segmentation** of the word in the song merits praise, and you and your child may continue the song with another object.

**However**, if your child does not segment the object correctly, it is important to provide correction and extra instruction. In this case it is helpful to say the word in isolation and clap out the syllables together with your child.

**Extension:** When your child is comfortable and consistently able to clap the words segmented into syllables, you can increase

the difficulty by increasing the number of syllables in the word. You may choose to increase the difficulty further by asking your

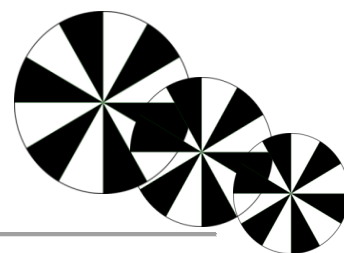
child to segment the words into individual sounds (phonemes).



# Sound Sing Along

adapted from Phonemical (2013d)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!segmenting/cktc>



**The ability to segment words** into both syllables and individual sounds (phonemes) is an important component of phonological awareness. This skill can be acquired through the use of song. The most challenging segmenting song in this handbook requires children to know the number of sounds you hear in a word as well as segmenting each sound in isolation from one another. The other segmenting songs in this handbook, *Transition Song* and *Hickity Tickity Bumble Bee*, required each syllable or sound to follow one another and did not require direct isolation.

**Sound Sing Along** requires children to segment individual sounds in words using the skills they have developed through other segmenting activities. When completing this activity, *Sound Sing Along*, it is advised that you begin with short words that have only two sounds.

## The Activity

**Begin** this activity by singing *Sound Sing Along* to your child. It will be necessary to sing the entire song to your child a couple of times in order for a strong sense of the song and the expectations that are required to be developed.

**Then**, both you and your child can sing the song in its entirety together.

**After** you and your child are familiar with the song, you can sing the song divided into your respective parts.

The lyrics to the song *Sound Sing Along* are to be sung to the tune of "Pop Goes the Weasel" and are as follows:

What are the sounds you hear in day?

What are the sounds in day?

How many sounds do you hear in day?

What sounds have you heard?

/d/ is the first sound in day.

/ay/ is sound number two.

I hear two sounds in day

Day has two sounds, it's true.

**The first verse** is for you, as a parent, to sing to your child. The underlined portion can be replaced with a word that your child is familiar with; be sure that the number of sounds is limited to two.

**The second verse** is for your child to sing, segmenting the word into individual sounds.

If your child is able to segment the sounds correctly, give positive feedback.

**However**, if your child has difficulty segmenting the sounds, repeat the word and work through it together, thinking

aloud in order to correctly segment the sounds in the word.

**Extension:** Once your child has mastered the task of segmenting words with two sounds, you can move on to words that have three sounds to increase the difficulty. The song is slightly different for longer words; the lyrics are as follows:

What are the sounds you hear in net?

What are the sounds in net?  
How many sounds are in net?  
What sounds have you heard?

/n/ is the first sound in net.

/e/ is sound number two.

/t/ is the last sound in net.

Net has three sounds, it's true.

# *Playing Games to Learn*

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*"Games lubricate the body and the mind."  
— Benjamin Franklin*

# Thumbs-Up, Thumbs-Down

*adapted from Blue Valley School District (n.d.)*

<http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=61312>



**Thumbs-Up, Thumbs-Down** is a simple game that requires just two players (a parent and a child). This activity requires no materials and no set-up. The great advantage of this game is that it can be played anywhere, including in the home, at the grocery store, in the car, on a walk, in the doctor's office and anywhere else parents and children are together.

## *The Activity*

**To start** the game ask your child to give you a thumbs-up if he/she hears two words that rhyme, and a thumbs-down if the words do not rhyme.

**Choose** two words and say them slowly to your child. The words that you choose should be familiar to your child. These words should be ones that your child encounters on a regular basis and has a connection to. These words should also have few commonalities between them; this includes starting with the same letter or fitting within the same category (e.g., animals), as this encourages your child to focus strictly on the element of rhyme.

**Ask** your child to show a thumbs-up to declare if the words rhyme and a thumbs-down if the words do not rhyme.

If your child answers correctly, provide praise to positively reinforce the understanding and recognition of rhyme. Repeat the game with another pair of words.

If your child's response was incorrect, provide an explanation of rhyme (the endings must be the same). Talk with your child to identify the thought process used to draw the conclusion that the words did or did not rhyme and provide any necessary clarification. Thinking aloud is a good strategy to use to demonstrate how to be successful at this game and ultimately recognizing rhyme.

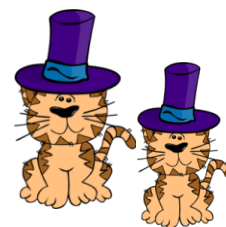
**Extension:** Once your child has a firm grasp of the concept of rhyme, the roles of the game can be reversed. In this scenario your child will list two words and you will show a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down to identify if the words rhyme or not.

In order to reinforce the concept of rhyme, intentionally provide an incorrect answer to ensure that your child questions your answer and provides you with correction. If your child is able to correct you, this demonstrates that he/she has a firm grasp of the element of rhyme.

# Hopscotch

*adapted from Phonemical (2013c)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**Hopscotch** is a game that most children are familiar with. Traditionally, hopscotch is a game that children play outside and on the playground; however with a few small changes this game can also be played inside. Furthermore, hopscotch can be made into a game that develops children's rhyming ability in order to improve their overall phonological awareness.

## *The Activity*

**Create** the outline of a hopscotch board, either inside or outside of the home. If you choose to create the board outside, sidewalk chalk is a cheap and effective way to draw the hopscotch board. However, if you choose to play this game inside the home, making a hopscotch board can easily be done by using masking tape on the floor. You may create your hopscotch board with as many or as few blocks as you and your child wish or as space permits

**After** the outline of your board is created, look through magazines or newspaper flyers in order to gather images that your child is familiar with. For the focus of the game (rhyming), it is also important that the images you choose are words for which it is easy to develop rhyming words. As this is important, it may be more effective for you to choose the images without your child. Images such as plate, rice and car are better

choices than microwave, broccoli and television. You will need one image for each square in your hopscotch board (you may wish to collect extra images in order to change the images throughout the game). Place one of your chosen images in each square on the board. Your board is now complete!

**Have your child** stand at the beginning of the hopscotch board and, using a small object such as a stone, marble or soft, small toy, throw the object to one of the squares. Your child will hop to the square to collect the object that was thrown.

**Before the object is collected**, your child must think of a rhyming word to correspond with the target word of the image that he/she landed on. This word can be a pseudo (pretend) word; the focus is that the words rhyme.

As your child develops rhyming skills, the use of pseudo words can be eliminated and you can require that the rhyming words are real words.

If your child is correct and able to generate a word that rhymes with the given image, provide encouragement and positive feedback. Continue the game by throwing the object to another square and following the same process.

If your child has difficulty generating a rhyming word, give your child an example of a word that rhymes with the target word in the image. Explain that the words have the same ending and that is what makes them rhyme. If you can, provide more than one example for that target word and continue the game. Working with your child to generate rhyming words may be necessary for the first few times in order to for him/her to become familiar with the activity. However, it is important to gradually release the responsibility, providing more opportunities for your child to complete the process independently.

**Variation:** Instead of playing hopscotch, the same concept can also be completed in a different form, through a bean bag toss. For this activity, instead of placing the images on a hopscotch board, the images will be lined up a few steps away from the child. Using an object such as a bean bag or small, soft toy, ask the child to throw the bag or toy to one of the images. When the bean bag or toy is retrieved, ask him/her to generate a word that rhymes with the image the bean bag or toy landed on.

# Riddles

adapted from Los Angeles County Office of Education (n.d.)

<http://teams.lacoe.edu/documentation/classrooms/patti/k-1/activities/onsets.html>



**Curiosity** is a natural quality that most children possess. Riddles draw upon this curiosity in order to draw children into the problem that is posed. Children naturally want to find a solution, encouraging them to think deeply about the concept of the riddle. In this case the topic children are being asked to consider when solving the riddle is rhyme.

## *The Activity*

**Develop a riddle** complete with an answer. Use words that your child has a strong understanding of; this places the focus on the riddle instead of on the vocabulary within the riddle.

**The riddle** can be guided using the following template:

What rhymes with dog and starts with /fr/?

Answer: frog

**Present the riddle** to your child in a manner that leaves him/her wanting to solve the problem. One strategy to use is to seem puzzled by the riddle and ask your child to help you solve it.

Allow a few minutes for your child to ponder the riddle. If he/she is able to answer successfully, give positive praise and

feedback and challenge your child with another riddle.

If your child has difficulty answering the riddle or answers incorrectly, think aloud with your child and work through the riddle together. First identify that it must begin with /fr/ (using the sample provided). Then explain that because you know it rhymes with dog it must have the same ending /og/. Finally, put the sounds of /fr/ and /og/ together to identify the answer to the riddle. It may take more than one example of working through the riddle together before your child is able to develop the solution independently.

Though the template of the riddle may seem simplistic, it asks children to consider a great deal in order to solve it correctly. Children must isolate the beginning sound, in the case of the example /d/. Children must understand that rhyme means that the ending sounds remain the same. Then, children must manipulate the initial word (dog) and remove the beginning sound to add a new beginning sound. This process leaves a great deal of room for breakdown to occur and the wrong solution to be given.

**Extension:** When your child is able to competently solve these types of riddles independently, challenge him/her by asking him/her to create a riddle. This may be something that you may have to work

through together, modeling and thinking aloud, to demonstrate how you created your riddles .





# Hopscotch

*adapted from Phonemical (2013c)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>

**Hopscotch** is a game that most children are familiar with. Traditionally, hopscotch is played outside on the playground; however with a few small changes this game can also be played inside. Furthermore, hopscotch can be made into a game that develops children's ability to blend syllables/individual sounds into words in order to improve the skill of blending as well as their overall phonological awareness.

## *The Activity*

**Create** the outline of a hopscotch board, either inside or outside of the home. If you choose to create the board outside, sidewalk chalk is a cheap and effective way to draw the hopscotch board. However, if you choose to play this game inside the home, marking a hopscotch board can easily be done using masking tape on the floor. You may create your hopscotch board with as many or as few blocks as you and your child wish or as space permits

**After** the outline of your board is created, look through magazines or newspaper flyers in order to gather images that your child is familiar with. This may be something that you wish to do with your child. Allowing your child to choose the images that will become incorporated into the board creates a sense of ownership. You will need

one image for each square on your hopscotch board (you may wish to collect extra images in order to change the images throughout the game). Place one of your chosen images in each square on the board. Your board is now complete!

**Have your child** stand at the beginning of the hopscotch board and, using a small object such as a stone, marble, or soft, small toy, throw the object to one of the squares. Your child will then hop to the image the object landed on. When your child reaches the image that the object is on, say the name of the image separated into syllables.

**Before your child collects the object**, he/she must blend the syllables together to generate the name of the image. The visual representation of the image provides assistance for the child as there is a visual aid to associate with the word.

If your child is able to blend the syllables together to produce the correct name of the image, provide encouragement and positive feedback. Continue the game by throwing the object to another square and following the same process.

If your child has difficulty blending the syllables together, repeat the syllables segmented once again. Each time gradually remove the space between them. It is likely

that your child will chime in and identify the target word. If not, remind him/her that the image is there to provide assistance.

Thinking aloud and explaining the process of blending the sounds together is also an effective way to aid in blending syllables together.

**Variation:** Instead of playing hopscotch, the same concept can also be completed in a different form, a bean bag toss. For this activity, instead of placing the images on a hopscotch board, the images will be lined up a few steps away from the child. Using

an object such as a bean bag or small, soft toy, ask the child to throw it to one of the images. When he/she retrieves the bean bag or toy, say the name of the image separated into syllables and ask your child to identify the image by blending the syllables together before the bean bag or toy can be picked up.

**Extension:** When your child is confident with blending words separated into syllables into words, begin separating the words into individual sounds (phonemes) for your child to blend together. This gives your child an added challenge.

## Come Together

adapted from Phonemical (2013a)

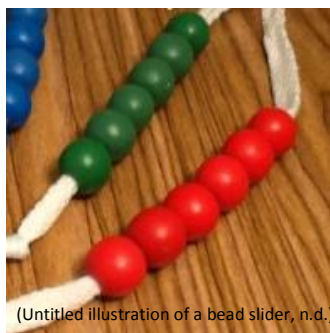
<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>



**Manipulatives** can be an excellent strategy to use when teaching children a new skill. Manipulatives are instructional aids that provide children with a visual representation of a concept. In the activity *Come Together*, manipulatives are used to develop the skill of blending syllables or phonemes (individual sounds) into words.

Manipulatives can take the shape of a variety of different objects. A manipulative can be something as simple as the use of blocks to represent syllables or phonemes.

A **bead slider** is an effective manipulative that is easy to make and use (an image of a bead slider is shown to the right). Make



(Untitled illustration of a bead slider, n.d.)

your own bead slider by knotting the end of a short string and sliding six mid-sized beads onto the string. Leave space on the end to slide the beads, then knot the other end. When using the bead slider, each bead is representative of a segment of a word, whether that is a syllable or an individual sound (phoneme). This provides a visual for children to better understand the process of blending these segments together. The bead slider will be useful in the activity *Come Together*.

### *The Activity*

**Choose** a word that is familiar to your child. This word can be from any part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.). However, it is important that it is not too long. Begin with a word that can be separated into two or three syllables. To increase the difficulty level increase the number of syllables in the target word.

**Say** the word you have chosen slowly, separated into syllables. Make sure to leave a distinct pause of one to two seconds between each syllable. As you say each syllable using the bead slider, slide each bead to one end, leaving a space after each bead.

**Repeat** the word segmented into syllables. This time leave a shorter pause between the syllables and move the beads closer together. Repeat this step three to four times until there are no spaces between the beads and no pauses between the syllables. At this point the word should be blended together.

As your child has observed you completing the activity, allow him/her to complete the process. Say a new word separated into syllables and allow your child to use the bead slider to blend the word together. At first your child may require some assistance

in identifying one bead for each syllable and sliding them together. However, as he/she improves, gradually allow your child to have the opportunity to complete the task independently.

**Extension:** Once your child is comfortable blending syllables into words, complete the same task blending individual sounds (phonemes) into words.

# *I Spy With My Little Eye*

adapted from Phonemical (2013c)  
<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**I Spy** is a game that most children play and become familiar with at a young age. Through some minor adjustments, this common game can be structured to promote blending, an important element of phonological awareness.

A **benefit** of this activity is that the game naturally creates enjoyment in learning. Also, this game can be played anywhere. This includes, but is not limited to, in the house, driving in the car, at the store, in the backyard, outside for a walk, etc. Extending the learning environment outside the home allows children to transfer their learning to other environments and disassociates one specific place as the learning environment.

If your child does not find this challenging, you may choose to provide clues to describe the object instead of simply naming the object. For example, instead of providing the above prompt for carrot, you may say "I spy something that is or · ange." This presents the same level of difficulty when blending the syllables together; however, greater thought is required in order to ultimately discover the object you are looking at, as further clues may need to be provided.

This activity does not directly rely on any visual representation; however, children do have the support of the items that are visible in order to provide some prompts if necessary to trigger the correct response.

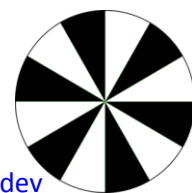
## *The Activity*

**To begin** the game, choose an object that is visible within the surrounding area. The object should divide into two or three syllables.

**Using the format** of the game *I Spy*, tell your child what you are looking at by separating the word into syllables. For example you may say, "I spy a car · rot." Your child must blend the two syllables together in order to discover what the object you have chosen is.

**Variation:** In order for the focus of the game to be on segmenting instead of blending, the roles can be reversed. In this game your child will provide the segmented clues for you to guess.

**Extension:** When your child is confident in the task of blending syllables, you can increase the difficulty by separating the clues into individual sounds (phonemes) for him/her to blend together. For example, you may say "I spy a /c/ /a/ /t/."



## Talk Like a Robot

adapted from Virginia Department of Education (1998)

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response\\_intervention/resources/ideas\\_activities\\_develop\\_phonological.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response_intervention/resources/ideas_activities_develop_phonological.pdf)

**In popular** movies and television shows for children that feature robots, robots have been known to talk in a segmented form. As children learn how to segment words into syllables, and ultimately phonemes, the use of robotic voices can be infused into learning.

Talking in a robotic voice can be fun for children. Robotic actions can be included in order to draw children into the game and make the activity more engaging and fun.

This activity, *Talk Like a Robot*, strictly involves speaking; no other materials or objects are necessary. This is beneficial because it can be played anywhere including in the home, in the car, at the store or out for a walk. Depending on the location of this game, the content of the conversation is likely to change, and this is helpful as children can experience segmenting in a variety of settings using different vocabulary words.

### *The Activity*

**Begin** by telling your child that you are going to play a game called *Talk Like a Robot*. Explaining that this is a game is important so that it is understood that this is not how he/she is expected to talk all the time, nor is it an appropriate way to speak.

**Speak** in short sentences to your child, developing a conversation. The content of the conversation is not the focus; the segmenting of speech is. As you speak, leave a pause after each syllable, emphasizing the robotic nature of your voice. Feel free to use robotic actions and movements in order to highlight the playfulness of the game.

When your child reciprocates within the conversation, encourage him/her to also talk like a robot. As you and your child speak like robots placing emphasis on segmenting each syllable, he/she is exposed to segmenting, as all of the speech your child produces is segmented. However, by listening to your words that are segmented, blending is also enforced.

**At first**, it is expected that your child will likely not be able to segment every word into syllables. As your child becomes more familiar with the activity, he/she will become more successful. Give positive feedback to the words that are segmented correctly. Continue to speak like a robot and segment the words into syllables throughout the conversation.

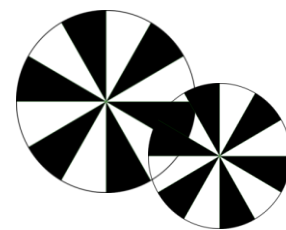
**Extension:** When your child is successful at segmenting words into syllables, begin to segment words into phonemes as you converse. Encourage your child to do the

same in order to increase the difficulty and provide a challenge.

# Hopscotch

*adapted from Phonemical (2013c)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/rhyming/cx3>



**Hopscotch** is a game that most children are familiar with. Traditionally, it is played outside on the playground. However, with a few small changes this game can also be played inside. Furthermore, hopscotch can be made into a game that develops children's ability to segment words into syllables/individual sounds (phonemes) in order to improve their overall phonological awareness.

## *The Activity*

**Create** the outline of a hopscotch board, either inside or outside of the home. If you choose to create the board outside, sidewalk chalk is a cheap and effective way to draw the hopscotch board. However, if you choose to play this game inside the home, a hopscotch board can be easily constructed using masking tape on the floor. You may create your hopscotch board with as many or as few blocks as you and your child wish or as space permits

**After** the outline of your board is created, look through magazines or newspaper flyers in order to gather images that your child is familiar with. This may be something that you wish to do with your child and allow him/her to choose the images that will become incorporated into the board. You will need one image for each square in your hopscotch board (you may wish to collect

extra images in order to change the images throughout the game). Place one of your chosen images in each square on the board. Your board is now complete!

**Have your child** stand at the beginning of the hopscotch board and throw a small object, such as a stone, marble or soft, small toy to one of the squares. When your child reaches the image that the object is on, ask him/her to say the name of the image segmented into syllables.

**To provide** your child with greater support when segmenting the word into syllables, you may encourage him/her to complete an action as each syllable is segmented. This action may include clapping, hopping, jumping, etc. when saying each syllable to emphasize the division of the word.

If your child is able to segment the word into syllables, provide encouragement, positive feedback and continue the game by throwing the object to another square and following the same process.

If your child has difficulty segmenting the word associated with the image into syllables, think aloud with your child describing the process of segmenting until success is achieved. Say the word segmented into syllables together in order to emphasize when the word should be divided; clapping out the syllables is often a



helpful technique. Ensure that with your help your child is successful in segmenting the word.

**Variation:** Instead of playing hopscotch, the same concept can also be completed using a bean bag toss. For this activity, instead of placing the images on a hopscotch board, the images will be lined up a few steps away from your child. Using an object, such as a bean bag or small, soft toy, ask your child to throw it to one of the images. Before he/she picks up the bean bag or toy, ask

your child to say the word represented in the image segmented into syllables.

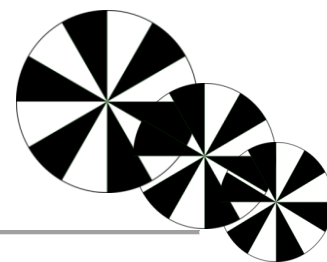
**Extension:** When your child is confident with segmenting words into syllables, ask him/her to segment the words into individual sounds (phonemes). This gives your child an added challenge.

Another option for an extension is to ask your child to say just the beginning sound or just the ending sound of a word instead of segmenting the whole word.

# *I'm Going on a Trip*

*adapted from Phonemical (2013b)*

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/phoneme/cr2d>



**Recognizing beginning sounds**, the first sound in a word that is heard, that are the same is one way to identify children's ability to segment words. Children must segment just the beginning sound in order for them to be able to recognize similar beginning sounds. The game, *I'm Going on a Trip*, is an excellent way to strengthen children's segmenting ability in an interactive way. By playing this game children are encouraged not only to recognize similar beginning sounds, but also to generate another word that shares the same beginning sound.

This game can be played using various themes; the traditional theme is about going on a trip. Going on a trip may be most appropriate for walking outside or driving in the car; however other themes can be applied to this game. For example, the theme of the game can be changed by playing the game in the kitchen and changing the name of the game to, *I'm Baking* or *I'm Cooking*. Using creativity, this game can be adapted to be played in a number of different settings, allowing children to transfer and apply their knowledge to different areas.

## *The Activity*

**To begin the game, *I'm Going on a Trip*,** choose a beginning sound that you would like your child to focus on for the duration

of the game. Using sounds that your child is very familiar with is a good place to start, for example using the beginning sound of his/her own name.

**After** you have chosen a beginning sound, think of a variety of words that start with the same sound. Using these words, list three or four of the words following the format below:

*I'm going on a trip and I will bring a dog.*

*I'm going on a trip and I will bring drinks.*

*I'm going on a trip and I will bring a diamond.*

Following this sequence, explain that there is something the same about everything coming on the trip. Ask your child what he/she will bring on the trip.

If your child is able to accurately list an item that has the same beginning sound, provide positive feedback and invite your child to join you on the trip! Begin the game again using a different beginning sound.

If your child is unsuccessful at generating an item that follows the same beginning sound, list a few more examples using the same format. Place an emphasis on the beginning sound. Then, give your child another opportunity to list an item.

If your child continues to struggle, provide an explanation of how the items are connected; the beginning sounds are the same. Provide your child with the opportunity to list an object once the pattern is revealed.

If he/she remains unsuccessful, give another example as well as a clear explanation with emphasis on all of the beginning sounds.

This game may be challenging the first few times it is played, until children are able to

grasp an understanding of segmenting the beginning sound in order to identify the pattern. However, once children are aware of the pattern, this activity becomes much easier.

**Extension:** In order to continue to challenge your child, once continuous success with identifying the pattern of the beginning sound and generating a word with the same beginning sound has been achieved, other patterns can be used. Other patterns may include words with the same ending sound.

# *Incorporating PA into Everyday Tasks*

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*"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."  
— John Dewey*

**Note:** The final section of this handbook provides a great deal of overlap between rhyming, blending and segmenting activities. This is an opportunity to integrate the elements of phonological awareness. Though the activities are written separately and can be used this way, parents are encouraged to integrate the activities and combine more than one element of phonological awareness into one activity.

## Listening to Music



**Rhyme** is often found in music; many songs in popular music boast lyrics that are filled with rhyme. This also holds true for children's songs. Listening to music with children is a great way to expose them to rhyme.

**Listening** to popular music is adequate to expose children to the use of rhyme in music. However, the use of children's songs allows this connection to become personal and relevant. This is because the words used in children's songs are usually more familiar to them, and also they are usually written in a literal sense in order for children make meaning of the song.

### *The Activity*

**To complete this activity**, in the beginning it is preferable to use music specifically designed for children.

**Play the music** for your child. At first, allow your child to listen to the songs and perhaps sing along once the lyrics become familiar. Your child may need to listen to the song several times before he/she is familiar enough with the song to sing it out loud. Sing along to promote this behaviour in your child. However, singing along with the song is not the ultimate goal; the goal is to recognize and identify rhyme.

**As you enjoy the music** with your child, draw his/her attention to the words that

rhyme within the song. There are various ways to do this including:

- emphasizing the words that rhyme with an action such as clapping
- choosing two words from the song and asking your child if the words rhyme
- replacing rhyming words with words that do not rhyme

Through each of these activities rhyme is highlighted using songs in a fun and playful way.

**Resources:** Online resources of children's songs can be found at the websites listed below:

<http://www.allmusic.com/album/100-sing-along-favorites-for-kids-mw0000697262>

This website provides an extensive audio library of short children's songs sung by children.

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4CA669FAA006393C>

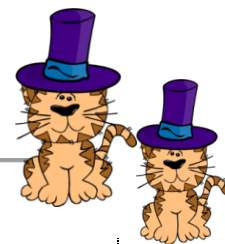
This website provides children's songs with both an audio track as well as a video to accompany the songs.

**Extension:** The use of popular music that can be found on the radio creates a greater challenge for your child, as these songs are not specifically designed for children to understand and relate to. This can increase

the difficulty level as it can be hard to narrow the focus. However, these songs can be incorporated provided that you ensure

the songs that you choose are lyrically appropriate for your child.

## Playing with Toys



**Toys** generally hold meaning for children. Children can connect with toys and become very familiar with their own toys. To capitalize on this familiarity, toys can be used to develop the understanding of rhyme in order to promote phonological awareness.

Children are usually very eager to talk about their toys to someone who will listen. By being the person who is willing to listen, parents can effectively teach children about rhyme.

The use of toys provides visual aids and images that children can associate with the words during a conversation.

### *The Activity*

**As you play** with your child, ask him/her to tell you about the toys; in the beginning discuss the basics of what the toy is (e.g., a doll, action figure, car) or the name of the toy (this may be a name that your child has given to the toy).

**Then**, ask your child to generate a word that rhymes with the toy description. For example, if the toy is a doll your child may generate the words fall, ball, hall, etc. The words that are generated to rhyme can be pseudo (pretend) words, especially for words that are more difficult to generate rhyming words for. However, the use of real

words should be encouraged wherever possible.

**Discuss the same topic** by choosing to ask other questions connected to the same toy. These questions may include, "What does your toy do?" or "What is your favourite thing about your toy?" Using the answers provided, ask your child to generate words that rhyme.

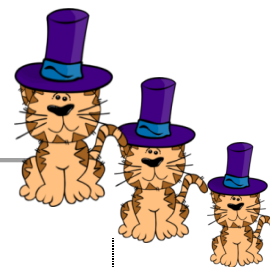
**For example**, if the response is that his/her favourite thing about the toy car is that it is red, ask your child to generate words that rhyme with red. Since the initial stimulus word (*red*) is generated by your child, it is something that he/she is familiar with, allowing the focus to be on developing rhyme.

**Extension:** When your child is comfortable completing this activity using toys as a springboard, you can challenge your child by completing the same activity centred around another topic. Topics can range depending on what you are doing.

For example, following your child's nightly routine, you may ask questions followed by rhyme generation. The conversation may proceed as follows:

*Ask your child the next step to get ready for bed (take a bath), followed by asking him/her to generate a rhyming word (path).*

## Rhyme Mobile



**Drawing** can be a fun activity for children to participate in, and with some direction they can also learn a great deal. This activity, *Rhyme Mobile*, allows children to use their creativity to create a craft in order to understand the concept of rhyme and help them remember it.

The activity allows children to complete the task with as much or as little help as necessary, depending on their skill level. Some children may be able to complete the craft almost independently while others may need assistance throughout the process.

### *The Activity*

**Begin** by taking the time to talk with your child about what rhyme means. For some children this may be a simple explanation to refresh what they already know (the ending of the words are the same), while for others it may require several examples to be provided.

**Together** list words that rhyme. One way to complete this process is for you to say a familiar word and ask your child to generate a rhyming word. This allows you to have control over the words to ensure that there are rhyming words to go with it.

**Using the pair of words** that have been generated, have your child draw one of the

words on a piece of cardstock. The cardstock should be about 4" by 4", but this can be determined at your discretion. On the opposite side of the cardstock, have your child draw an image of the other rhyming word. For example, if the words were bee and tree, an image of a bee would be drawn on one side while an image of a tree would appear on the other.

**Repeat** this process four or five more times. Then, attach a piece of string to each piece of cardstock and tie the string to a coat hanger.

**The mobile**, with pairs of rhyming words that are drawn by your child, can be hung up in your child's room in order to provide him/her with familiar examples of rhyming words.

This craft can be referred to at a later date when rhyming is being discussed, for example during reading time or play time.

**Extension:** After completing the mobile with assistance, your child can continue to add images to the mobile independently. This can provide your child with more ownership over what he/she has created and present a greater challenge. However, make sure to oversee your child from a distance to ensure that accurate rhyming pairs are being generated.





## Creating a Grocery List

adapted from Phonemical (2013a)

<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!blending/c24vq>

**Grocery lists** can be a mundane task, and often parents do not consider involving children in the process. However, children can gain something from the process if it is approached correctly. The activity of creating a grocery list can be used to develop the skill of blending, one of the three main elements of phonological awareness.

### *The Activity*

**Invite** your child to help you create your grocery list before you go shopping. It is more valuable if you are creating an actual shopping list and not a pretend one just for the activity. The creation of a real shopping list makes the experience more authentic for your child and gives a sense that he/she is helping accomplish a task that must be completed.

**To begin**, use flyers from various grocery stores as visual aids to support your child. It is not necessary that you use the flyer from the grocery store that you shop at, as the purpose of the flyer is simply so that your child has a visual image to associate with the word.

**Using the flyer**, point to an item that you need to add to your grocery list and say it, separated into syllables. If possible begin with words with fewer syllables.

**Ask your child** to blend the syllables together to tell you what you should write on the grocery list. When your child has correctly blended the syllables together, give him/her praise and add the item to the grocery list. Allow your child to see the list grow as he/she is successful at the task of blending the separated syllables together.

If your child is unable to successfully blend the syllables together to produce an item for the grocery list, work with your child to blend the syllables together. Slowly remove the pauses between each separated syllable in order to assist him/her with blending. Ask your child to repeat after you as you remove the pauses.

**Extension:** When your child is able to skillfully blend words separated into syllables to create a grocery list, you can increase the challenge by separating the words into individual sounds (phonemes) for your child to blend together to identify the word.

Another extension is to complete the activity without the assistance of the flyer. Without the visual aid acting as support for your child, the task is more difficult.

## Unpacking Groceries



**Unpacking groceries** may not seem like an activity for children to participate in. However, unpacking groceries can be adapted to be an enriching learning experience if it is executed properly. This activity aims to target the element of blending, using it to accomplish a task.

This is a great activity, as it is authentic. Unpacking groceries is something that must happen, and by allowing children to be involved they are able to gain the sense that they are helping, and incidentally they are learning something.

### *The Activity*

**After a grocery shopping trip** ask your child to help unpack the groceries. Assign your child the task of getting the groceries out of the bags and passing them to you so that you can put them away in the appropriate place.

**Ask** your child to unpack a specific item by saying it separated into syllables. By saying the item separated into syllables, this forces your child to use the technique of blending the syllables together to identify the item that you have requested.

**The items purchased** are effective visual aids for your child, as the items give him/her a set of objects to choose from when blending to check the accuracy. Your child can use the available items as cues to determine which item is being requested.

If your child is able to blend the syllables together in order to identify and pass you the correct item, give praise and thank him/her for helping you.

If your child is having difficulty identifying the item that is being requested, limit the number of choices that are provided to three items. If your child still experiences difficulty, work together by thinking aloud and slowly blending the syllables together until your child can choose the correct item from the three available.

**Extension:** When your child is confident at blending syllables to identify the correct item that you are requesting, the difficulty can be increased by separating the word into individual sounds (phonemes) when requesting an item. This challenges your child as he/she must consider each phoneme when blending the sounds together to produce a word.

## Someone's in the Kitchen



**Baking and cooking** can be a fun activity for both parents and children to do together. Often this activity is rewarding because there is an end product that both parents and children can enjoy together.

However, spending time making something in the kitchen can provide other rewards through developing the skill of blending. By using the following activity, *Someone's in the Kitchen*, time in the kitchen can be spent producing more than just food, as understanding of blending can be developed.

### *The Activity*

**When stirring up something tasty** in the kitchen with your child provide opportunities for him/her to practice the skill of blending syllables into words. You can promote this skill by asking your child to find the ingredients that are necessary for you to cook/bake.

**Begin** by asking your child to get out the first ingredient. When you ask for the desired ingredient, say the name of the item separated into syllables. Your child

must blend the syllables together in order to identify the ingredient that is required.

**As this is an authentic task** that your child will see the purpose of, he/she will have greater motivation to complete the blending of the syllables. Complete this process for each ingredient as necessary.

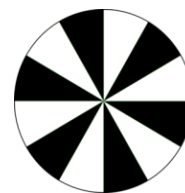
If your child is able to successfully blend the syllables to identify the ingredient that you are requesting, give positive feedback and thank him/her for assisting you in cooking/baking.

If your child is unable to successfully blend the syllables to identify the ingredient that you are requesting, think aloud to describe the process of blending syllables together. Slowly remove the pauses between separated syllables in order for your child to hear the process of blending and become involved in it.

**Extension:** When requesting the ingredients, in order to create a greater challenge for your child, separate the words into individual sounds (phonemes) for your child to blend together.

## *Creating a Grocery List*

*adapted from Phonemical (2013a)*  
<http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/#!/blending/c24vq>



**Grocery lists** can be a mundane task, and often parents do not consider involving children in the process. However, children can gain something from the activity if it is approached correctly. The activity of creating a grocery list can be used to develop the skill of segmenting, one of the three main elements of phonological awareness.

### *The Activity*

**Invite** your child to help you create your grocery list before you go shopping. It is more valuable if you are creating an actual shopping list and not a pretend one just for the activity. The creation of a real shopping list makes the experience more authentic for your child and gives him/her a sense of satisfaction that a task that must be completed is being accomplished.

**To begin**, use flyers from various grocery stores as visual aids to support your child. It is not necessary that you use the flyer from the grocery store that you shop at; the purpose of the flyer is simply so that your child has a visual image to associate with the word.

**Using the flyer**, point to an item that you need to add to your grocery list and say it to

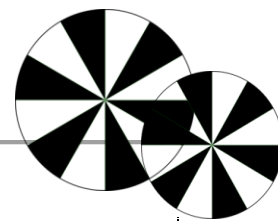
your child very clearly. If possible begin with words with fewer syllables.

**Ask your child** to segment the word into syllables. It may be helpful to encourage your child to complete an action, gesture or movement (such as clapping) for each syllable as he/she says them out loud. As your child correctly segments the word into syllables, write the word out, adding it to your grocery list. Allow your child to see the list grow as he/she successfully at segments the words into syllables.

If your child is unable to successfully segment the word into syllables, work with your child until success is achieved. One strategy to lead your child towards success is to say the word slowly and clap the syllables out loud with him/her. Slowing down the actions and the speech allows your child to clearly hear where one syllable ends and another begins.

**Extension:** When your child is able to skillfully segment words into syllables to create a grocery list you can increase the challenge by asking your child to segment the words into individual sounds (phonemes).

## Unpacking Groceries



**Unpacking groceries** may not seem like an activity for children to participate in. However, unpacking groceries can be developed into an enriching learning experience for children if it is executed properly. This activity aims to target the element of segmenting.

This is a great activity, as it is authentic. Unpacking groceries is something that must happen, and by allowing children to be involved they are able to gain the sense that they are helping, and incidentally they are learning something.

### *The Activity*

**After a grocery shopping trip** ask your child to help unpack the groceries. Assign him/her the task of getting the groceries out of the bags and passing them to you so that you can put them away in the appropriate place.

**Ask** your child to unpack a specific item. Begin with items with fewer syllables and increase the number of syllables as the activity continues. As your child passes you the item, ask him/her to segment the name of the item into syllables. Using gestures or actions (such as clapping) may help your child segment the word into syllables so that he/she can hear where each syllable begins and ends.

If your child is able to segment the word into syllables, give praise and thank him/her for helping you.

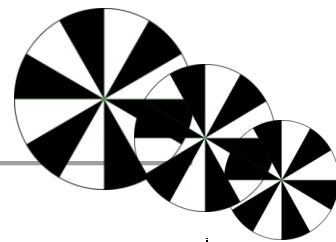
If your child is having difficulty segmenting the word into syllables, some remedial action may be necessary. Work with your child, thinking aloud. Say the word slowly together and then say the word slowly segmented into syllables in order for your child to hear and imitate.

**Another strategy** that can be used to unpack groceries and practice segmenting is to ask your child to unpack all the items that start with a specific sound (phoneme) first. For example, asking your child to pass you all the items that start with /d/ first, then, requesting all the items that begin with /s/.

This encourages your child to segment the beginning sound from the rest of the word. Using this strategy your child has the help of the items in the bags to choose from.

**Extension:** When your child is confident at segmenting words into syllables, the difficulty can be increased by asking him/her to segment the word into individual sounds (phonemes).

## Someone's in the Kitchen



**Baking and cooking** can be a fun activity for both parents and children to do together. Often this activity is rewarding because there is an end product that both parents and children can enjoy together.

However, spending time making something in the kitchen can provide other rewards through developing the skill of segmenting. By using the following activity, *Someone's in the Kitchen*, time in the kitchen can be spent producing more than just food; an understanding of segmenting can be developed.

### *The Activity*

**When stirring up something tasty** in the kitchen with your child, provide opportunities for him/her to practice the skill of segmenting words into syllables. You can promote this by requiring your child to segment each ingredient into syllables before adding it into what you are baking/cooking.

**Begin** by asking your child to get out the first ingredient. Prior to adding the ingredient into what you are

baking/cooking, ask your child to segment the word into syllables.

Clapping the syllables of the word, or completing another action or movement, is helpful when segmenting words in order for each syllable to be clearly identified.

As your child successfully segments each ingredient into syllables, give positive feedback and thank him/her for assisting you in cooking/baking.

If your child is unable to successfully segment the ingredients into syllables, think aloud, working through the process together. Slowly segment each syllable of the word as you complete an action (such as clapping) in order for him/her to hear the process of segmenting and become involved.

**Extension:** When your child can confidently segment words into syllables, you can increase the difficulty of this activity. The difficulty can be increased by asking your child to segment each ingredient into individual sounds (phonemes) before adding it to the baking/cooking.

### *Next Steps*

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After investing time into developing children's phonological awareness by completing many, if not all, of the activities within the handbook, parents are likely to see improvement and growth in their children's understanding of phonological awareness and likely some change in their language and reading abilities (even if these are in the preliminary stages). As children enter school, communication with their teachers is important. Ensure that their teachers are aware of their successes and abilities as well as any known challenges they may be facing. If children make few gains in the acquisition of phonological skills by the time they enter kindergarten, parents are encouraged to discuss these concerns with a professional, such as a teacher. Most concerns in the area of phonological awareness can likely be addressed by providing children with further instruction or by directing parents towards other professionals or resources.

## *Additional Resources*

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For parents who wish to continue exploring phonological awareness and alternative activities to complete with their children, the following list includes a variety of other resources that may be helpful in this endeavor. Some of these resources are sources that inspired activities in this handbook, while others represent new resources for parents to discover and extend their, as well as their children's, understanding of phonological awareness.

### *Websites*

❖ <http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/>

This website is an excellent resource to supplement this handbook. The home page provides a clear explanation of what phonological awareness is and the basics of how to promote its development in children. At the top of the webpage (as seen in this image) there are several tabs to choose from. These tabs include preparatory activities,



rhyming,  
phoneme  
awareness,

segmenting, blending and manipulation. By clicking on each of these sections, the user is led to a number of activities that develop the targeted area. Many of these activities share the same qualities as those found in this handbook, as they are authentic and easy to apply to situations with children.



- ❖ <http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/education/dept/dept.php?sectiondetailid=23522>
- &

Blue Valley School District has developed a website that is easy to navigate for parents to utilize when further developing the phonological awareness of their children. Among the information provided is a section labelled "Reading Terminology" that provides brief definitions of common words used when describing the development of the reading process. Following this section there is a link for each grade, from kindergarten through to grade 5, that provides information for parents as well as at-home activities that can be completed for each grade level. These activities are organized based on the skill that is targeted.

- ❖ <http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents/>

Reading Rockets is a comprehensive website that has an entire section devoted to resources specifically for parents. In this area of the website, explanations of basic components of reading, how to help children succeed in these areas, popular children's books, who is at risk for reading difficulties, a glossary of terms and frequently asked questions can be found. One link within "Reading 101" discusses phonological awareness examining how to identify children who struggle in this area and how parents can help at home, including blending and segment games to play with children. Though the entire website is geared towards the overall skill of reading, and not specifically phonological awareness, there are valuable resources specifically created for parents on this topic.

## *Blogs*

Blogs are a unique and popular way to share information with others interested in the same topic. There are many blogs created devoted to the development of phonological awareness in children. Remember that anyone can create a blog; the following are blog entries that provide useful information, but it is important to think critically when reading blog entries when looking for factual information. The following blog entry [<http://fun-a-day.com/rhyming-activities-for-children/>] is devoted to activities that develop children's rhyming ability. These activities complement those found in this handbook as they encourage authentic and play-based learning through fun activities that children enjoy. However, some of these require greater planning before they can be implemented. Another blog entry [<http://blog.maketaketeach.com/8-great-ideas-for-teaching-segmenting-and-blending/>] provides several ideas for manipulatives and visual aids to use when teaching blending and segmenting. Some of these aids can be incorporated into activities within this handbook in order to enhance them and meet children's individual needs. However, others can be applied as stand-alone activities to develop the skills of blending and segmenting.

## *Books*

- ❖ The Phonological Awareness Handbook for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers  
(Ericson & Juliebö, 1998)

Though this resource is written for teachers, there is content that is valuable to parents. The book is structured in a format that is very easy to follow and is divided in a manner

similar to this handbook, based on the elements of phonological awareness (rhyming, blending and segmenting). Within each of these sections the element is well described and a few activities are provided. Though not all the information in this resource is applicable to parents, there is pertinent information that can augment parents' understanding and improve the phonological awareness of children.

❖ Inclusive Literacy Lessons: For Early Childhood (Schiller & Willis, 2008)

This book is an excellent resource that is devoted to providing literacy lessons for children of all abilities. The book is organized into fundamental components of literacy, and chapter three is dedicated to phonological awareness. Chapter three provides basic information about phonological awareness as well as definitions of words that are used frequently throughout the chapter. A number of activities are provided; some activities are for a small group while others can be completed in a one-on-one setting. Each activity has a variety of adaptations that can be made based on the ability and needs of children including visual impairments, hearing impairments, cognitive challenges, motor delays, speech/language delays and emotional/behaviour issues.

### *Interactive Programs*

❖ iPad Applications

For iPad users there are a number of applications available that children can use to develop their phonological awareness. Many of these applications come at a cost ranging from \$2.99 to \$29.99. There are a number of applications devoted to syllable awareness, the series of applications (*Syllable Awareness*) includes a variety of themes

such as animals, household items, food, transportation, seasons and holidays. *Blending SE*, is the student version of an application to promote the element of blending. *Target Sound Identification (TSI)* incorporates a number of elements of phonological awareness with the ultimate goal being for children to achieve the ability to recognize phonemes and be able to break down words into individual sounds. It is suggested that parents work with children while using the program in order to provide assistance if necessary. This is especially important when children first begin using a new program.

#### ❖ *Balanced Literacy®*

Balanced Literacy® is an interactive program produced by Intellitools that supports the development of language for children between kindergarten and grade 2. A variety of mediums are used to promote language development including books, vocabulary words, computer games, graphics and songs. This program is organized into nine units designed for children to work through over the course of a year.

#### ❖ *Jolly Phonics*

*Jolly Phonics* is a child-centred program that can be used as an extension to the activities found in this handbook. *Jolly Phonics* promotes literacy to children including two of the basic elements of phonological awareness, blending and segmenting. This program encourages children to develop an understanding of letter–sound correspondence, letter formation and spelling.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook for parents of children between preschool and grade 1 to assist them in developing their children's phonological awareness. The focus on phonological awareness was determined because phonological awareness is strongly connected to early literacy including both language and reading development (Brice & Brice, 2009; Ehri et al., 2001; Gunning, 2000; Mody, 2004; Snow et al., 1998). In order for this handbook to meet the needs of parents and their children, authentic activities were provided as well as the foundational information necessary to guide the implementation of these activities.

Through the preliminary literature search used to conceptualize the handbook, it became evident that parents were the best candidates to provide phonological awareness instruction to their preschool to grade 1 children (Shaffer et al., 2005; Snow et al., 1998). Furthermore, a gap was found between professionals' knowledge about phonological awareness and the knowledge that parents possess (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This project aims to bridge the knowledge gap and provide parents with authentic activities that they can complete with their children within and outside of the home. The handbook provides a variety of activities designed for children to progress through three increasing skill levels of task difficulty as well as three different elements of phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, and segmenting).

### **Summary of the Project**

This project began with a comprehensive examination of current literature surrounding phonological awareness. The concept of phonological awareness was examined closely with a specific focus on the skills of rhyming, blending, and

segmenting (Gunning, 2000). Through the review of the literature it became apparent that the development of phonological awareness is crucial to promoting early literacy (Snow et al., 1998). The promotion of early literacy includes reading, writing, and oral language (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Snow et al., 1998). Research suggests that the improvement of phonological awareness will facilitate improvements in other areas of development including reading and oral language (Hogan et al., 2005; Snow et al., 1998; Troia, 2004).

The literature surrounding home literacy and the role of parents indicates that parents have the potential to positively impact the development of their children's literacy skills (Shaffer et al., 2005; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Therefore, the audience of this project was focused on parents, as evidence demonstrates the importance of their role in their children's development of early literacy skills in general and phonological awareness specifically (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

Based on a review of resources currently available to parents that can be used to help them promote their children's phonological awareness as well as the review of current research, the handbook presented here was created. The handbook represents a resource that is unique with its focus on activities that are authentic in their application to real-life experiences versus traditional worksheet-based activities. The authentic quality of the handbook provides parents with a user-friendly resource that they can apply readily to their daily lives.

Upon the creation of the first draft of the handbook, two professionals (teachers) were invited to review the handbook and provide feedback. The teachers were asked to

consider the structure, clarity, and accessibility of the handbook. The feedback from professionals provided the project with face validity (Creswell, 2013). The teachers responded with feedback through a complied e-mail so that comments could not be traced to any specific teacher. This feedback was considered and incorporated into the final version of the handbook.

### **Conclusions from Formative Feedback**

Two elementary school teachers reviewed the first draft of this handbook and provided feedback about its structure, clarity, parental accessibility, practical application, and overall effectiveness. All feedback received from the professionals was considered and in some instances applied to the final version of the handbook in order to improve the overall product and better meet the needs of parents, children, and teachers.

### **Comments Regarding Structure**

The teachers provided feedback stating, "The handbook was very clear, and easy for us to follow and understand." This feedback suggests that the handbook met the goal of being easy to use and, presumably, parent friendly. It was important that the structure and layout of the handbook was easy to follow so that parents would not be frustrated when using this resource that is, that it was user friendly. This is achieved through a variety of means including the division of the handbook into sections based on the type of activity (reading, singing songs, playing games, and everyday activities), the element of phonological awareness being targeted (rhyming, blending, and segmenting), the use of images as indicators of the level of difficulty, and the order in which information is introduced.

Another feature that the teachers commented on was that the definitions of terminology were provided early on. The teachers stated, "I thought the way you gave examples and defined all terminology made it easy for parents to understand and use." They indicated that the order in which information was presented was logical, with terms being defined prior to their use. The teachers also found the terminology exemplars to be useful as they provided clarity to the reader. By providing parents with an introduction to new information and terminology at the beginning of the handbook, users can expand their knowledge and understanding of phonological awareness prior to engaging in the activities with their children. The teachers commented that the clearly defined terminology presented at the beginning of the handbook makes it easy for parents to understand and use the activities found later in the handbook. Finally, the teachers commented on the overall flow and progression of information within the handbook stating, "The whole structure of the handbook was good and had a nice flow."

### **Handbook Revisions and Future Considerations**

After reviewing the handbook, the teachers provided a few specific recommendations that they believe would strengthen it. The first was to include visual aids to accompany the rhymes and song lyrics "Some additions to consider are to include: visual aids, such as the use of graphics/symbols to accompany rhymes and songs." Through the addition of visual aids to the rhymes and songs, the lyrics would be made much more accessible to children (Skibbe et al., 2004). As a result, children would likely be able to learn the rhymes and songs more quickly and participate in singing them earlier. This would accelerate the progress of children, as they could rely on the visual aids at the beginning of an activity (Brice & Brice, 2009; Phillips et al., 2008). In future

editions of the handbook, visual aids could be incorporated using clip art, videos, or kinesthetic actions. In the interim, many of the recommended online resources include visuals and videos as accompaniment. Parents may also wish to create accompanying visuals in order to facilitate their children's learning process and accelerate their understanding. If parents choose to take this approach, it is important that the images selected are those that children can relate to quickly and trigger the correct response to the corresponding lyrics.

The teachers provided two recommendations for resources (*Jolly Phonics* and *Balanced Literacy*) that were added to the "Additional Resources" section of the handbook. These resources contain visual and kinesthetic activities and can be used as part of next steps in promoting children's literacy. Though these resources are not limited to phonological awareness, they do promote basic literacy skills and develop early literacy within children.

While the teachers did not express any concerns about the accessibility of the handbook to parents, it could be argued that only parents who demonstrate a fairly high level of literacy could use the document. This comment reflects the print nature of the document and the use of some elevated language throughout it. In order for the handbook to be more accessible to all parents (including those who may have reading difficulties or for whom English is not a first language), some of the language contained in it could be changed (to represent a lower reading level) and scaffolds could be incorporated throughout. Scaffolds may include images, video links, and summaries of the main information.

### **Positive Qualities of the Handbook**

The teachers indicated that the handbook was well constructed to meet the goals that it set out to accomplish, specifically, providing parents with knowledge of phonological awareness and authentic activities to promote phonological awareness in their children. The teachers felt that it was well written and the activities were easy for parents to implement to improve their children's phonological awareness: "We thought your handbook was well written with many practical activities for parents to complete." Teachers appreciated features such as the division of the handbook (division into types of activities as well as elements) and increasing levels of skill difficulty. The teachers also appreciated the practicality of the activities and the ease with which they believed parents could implement them in their everyday lives with their children: "It was very practical." The teachers discussed the clearly defined terminology as a positive feature that makes the handbook easy for parents to use and draw meaning from. Finally, the teachers shared an appreciation for the structure and layout of the handbook, believing that it made the handbook practical and readily usable.

### **Implications for Theory**

The handbook was specifically designed for parents based on the theoretical works of Bronfenbrenner and his ecological systems theory, stating that the natural environment that children are raised in has the greatest influence on their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). In the case of very young children, this influence comes from their parents (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005). This provides support for the handbook, as it is designed to reach the demographic that has the largest influence on young children: their parents.



As Brofenbrenner suggests that parents have the largest influence on the development of their young children (Brofenbrenner, 1977, 1989; Shaffer et al., 2005), this handbook contributes knowledge to support parental interactions with their children. The handbook presents a variety of activities that parents can complete with their children in order to facilitate the development of their phonological awareness skills. Furthermore, the handbook provides an exploration of the ecological systems theory and provides parents with knowledge of Brofenbrenner's ecological systems theory and its application.

Children develop within their environment rather than as isolated individuals (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Therefore, a strong parent–child relationship that incorporates authentic experiences promotes their positive development in a variety of areas including reading and language (Doyle & Zhang, 2011; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003). The handbook developed here can provide parents with a comprehensive resource that is grounded in theory in order to promote their children's phonological awareness and ultimately reading and language skills through the completion of home-based literacy activities.

### **Implications for Practice**

The intention of this project was to create a readily usable handbook intended for parents to help them promote their children's phonological awareness. The handbook is not intended to be an all-inclusive or comprehensive resource for the development of children's phonological awareness skills. Rather, the use of other resources is encouraged throughout the handbook to supplement and support the information and activities found in it.

The handbook incorporates and emphasizes authentic activities for parents and children to complete together. These activities involve movement, visuals, and questioning in order to promote phonological awareness instead of traditional worksheets and pen-and-paper activities. In this way, this unique design of the handbook offers something that is practical and relevant for parents to use with their children inside and outside of the home. It was believed that the inclusion of authentic activities was imperative as it made the handbook unique and more accessible than worksheet-based activities.

However, not all parents are aware that it is essential for them to promote literacy development for their children. This places the children and parents at a disadvantage if they are unaware of the resources, such as this handbook, available to them. In order to combat this the role of schools are very important to provide resources to children and their families to ensure the promotion of early literacy.

Although the handbook is created for parents, there are practical implications for teachers as well. While teachers observe students' needs in the classroom and can identify areas of difficulty, they may not always be able to implement effective interventions in the classroom. Thus, resources such as this handbook provide teachers with a resource that they can share with parents to assist in the students' learning and development. The handbook can provide teachers with a starting point to suggest to parents when seeking additional assistance for their children in the general areas of reading and language development or in the specific area of phonological awareness.

Teachers can also utilize this handbook as a tool for professional development as it is based in theory and provides practical applications that can be modified for

classroom settings, as many of the activities can be adapted for small groups of children to participate in at one time. The authentic experiences included within the handbook can widen teachers' perspectives about the development of phonological awareness and can encourage experience-based activities rather than pen-and-paper activities and worksheets that are traditionally used in the classroom to develop phonological awareness.

Teacher candidates can also benefit from reviewing this handbook as it provides foundational information and basic instruction in the area of phonological awareness. Greater training in the area and development of children's phonological awareness is something from which most teacher candidates, especially those at the primary level, can benefit. Training in this area should include the foundational information found at the beginning of the handbook outlining the importance of phonological awareness as well as the general guiding principles underlying its development and the activities contained throughout the handbook that can be used to develop children's phonological awareness skills. If teachers and teacher candidates understand the importance and value of phonological awareness and implement these practices in their classrooms, it is likely that their students will experience reading success (Snow et al., 1998).

Finally, community services agencies would be able to benefit from the knowledge and activities in the handbook. This can include librarians, parent educators, and community run programs. The knowledge of the handbook would allow these professionals to be able to recommend the handbook to parents in order for to gain knowledge regarding phonological awareness. Also, the community service agencies may

be able to incorporate some of the activities into their programs in order to directly benefit children within their practice.

### **Future Research**

The literature review that was completed in order to develop the handbook reflected research from academic literature including edited books as well as journal articles. Teaching professionals also contributed to the development of the handbook. However, parents were not contacted to provide their feedback during the development of the handbook. Further research could involve contacting parents to determine their perspectives on resources for promoting phonological awareness. In addition, general as well as specific feedback from parents about the handbook could be collected in order to ensure that it meets their needs and that the resource is accurately directed towards them. This direct contact and feedback from parents would ensure that the handbook does exactly what it was designed to do and thereby increase its overall credibility and validity (Creswell, 2013). It would also increase the face validity of the handbook, as the perspectives of parents are included instead of relying on teaching professionals to have an understanding of the needs of parents.

Another group that could be consulted to provide a review of the handbook are parent educators. This would provide another dimension to the feedback received. Parent educators would be able to provide an evaluation of the practical application, parent accessibility, and the overall effectiveness of the handbook, as they are aware of the needs that parents may have that should be addressed in the handbook.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the handbook, a study could be conducted comparing the progress of children's phonological awareness skills. In one group, parents

would complete the activities found in the handbook with their children on a regular basis, while in the other group(s), parents would not provide such intervention or would complete traditional pen-and-paper activities with their children. Through monitoring the phonological development of the children in each group, any benefits associated with using the handbook could be documented as well as any possible changes to improve the effectiveness of the handbook and its activities.

Furthermore, this handbook is created for parents of children with typical as well as atypical language development. That is, it does not cater to any specific special needs that children may experience. This is an area that could be further investigated in order to provide greater support to parents of children with a variety of learning exceptionalities. Through this further research, information would need to be added to the handbook in order to meet the needs of these children, and many of the activities would likely need to be adapted. For instance, children diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder would benefit from activities conducted in shorter time frames, activities that involve movement, and receiving rewards as they achieve success (Kronenberger & Meyer, 2001). For children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, the use of gestures and images becomes very important during intervention, and additional resources would need to be included to implement these additional features (Kronenberger & Meyer, 2001). Therefore, an additional section may be included in the handbook that outlines such adaptations to activities. While these additions would be aimed to target specific areas of exceptionality, it is likely that most parents and children could benefit from the additional information and resources. Through this additional investigation and research, the

handbook would be able to reach a much wider audience and have a greater impact on all children.

The handbook created for this project is specific to the development of children's phonological awareness. Through further research, other aspects of early literacy could be included with authentic activities developed to benefit children in a variety of areas. Other aspects of early literacy may include letter/sound knowledge, print awareness, listening comprehension, and written and oral language (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; van Kleeck, 2004). Again, the handbook would be focused on providing parents with authentic activities to develop each of these areas. This can include, but is not limited to, memory games that incorporate letter/sound knowledge, drawing attention to the basics of print awareness when reading to familiarize children with common print practices, story sequencing to improve listening comprehension, or vocabulary development activities to improve written and oral language use. Further instruction in each of these areas provides children with a more holistic approach and understanding to early literacy (Snow et al., 1998).

Finally, another area that could be further researched in order to improve the handbook is the development of supporting multimedia resources such as instructional videos and interactive on-line programs. This would make the information more accessible to a wider audience of parents, including those that do not possess strong literacy skills or who prefer to work in other modalities beyond print. Other resources that are not print based may include, but are not limited to, the use of videos and interactive on-line resources. Through the further research suggested, a handbook that is accessible to a wider audience of parents can be developed.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The intent of this project was to create a resource for parents to promote phonological awareness in their children with a focus on using authentic activities. Through a review of relevant literature and the feedback and validation from professional teachers, the handbook produced here provides a foundational outline about phonological awareness as well as provides a variety of practical activities that parents can use to promote phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, and segmenting). This project is relevant to parents and children, as gains in phonological awareness often result in corresponding improvements in reading and language development.

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